Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

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OPINION METER

This week's poll:
On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest, what's your level of optimism for 2009?

Let your voice be heard! Go to www.saipantribune.com to cast your vote.

100 DAYS without a government budget for FY 2009

INSIDE

New Congress
The Capitol rang loud with vows to fix the economy as Congress opened for business.

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Israeli Attack
Israeli mortar shells exploded near a U.N. school sheltering hundreds of people and at least 30 Palestinians died.

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REP. KILILI SABLAN SWORN INTO OFFICE

'A landmark day in CNMI history'

By KRISTI EATON
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REPORTER

Delegate Gregorio "Kilili" C. Sablan became the CNMI's first-ever member of Congress on Jan. 6, 2009, setting out an agenda that prioritizes President-elect Barack Obama's proposed stimulus package and participation in crafting rules for the impending federalization of local immigration.

RELATED NEWS
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- Guam's Bordallo is sworn in for a 4th term. **PAGE 6**

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Delegate Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan places his left hand on the Bible provided by Bishop Tomas A. Camacho in the mock swearing in conducted by Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi. The event took place in the Rayburn Room of the U.S. Capitol building just off the floor of the House of Representatives.

Bush declares three marine monuments

By DINA CAPPIELLO
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

WASHINGTON (AP)—In the largest marine conservation effort in U.S. history, President George W. Bush on Tuesday designated what he called "three beautiful and biologically diverse areas of the Pacific Ocean" as national marine monuments.

The areas include the home of a giant land crab, a sunken island ringed by pink-colored coral, and equatorial waters teeming with sharks and other predators and total some 195,274 square miles (505,800 sq. kilometers). Included in the new designation formally announced by Bush at the White House are the Mari-

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AP

President George W. Bush looks up at Benigno R. Fitial, governor of the U.S. Commonwealth Northern Mariana Islands, after signing documents to establish the Mariana Trench Marine National Monument Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2009, at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building in the White House complex in Washington.

Local reactions mixed on monument's designation

By NAZARIO RODRIGUEZ JR.
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REPORTER

The designation of a marine monument in the CNMI drew mixed reactions from several government officials as well as from conservation groups and a member of the U.S. Congress.

Guam Delegate Madeleine Z. Bordallo said she was disappointed by the process that President George W. Bush and his administration used under the Antiquities Act to reach the decision.

Ike Cabrera, Agnes McPhetres, Andrew Salas and the Friends of the Monument issued a statement praising Bush for the proclamation.

The new monument encompasses about 195,000 square miles of oceans surrounding the islands of Uracas, Maug and Asuncion, 21 hydrothermal volcanic vents, and the entire stretch of the Marianas Trench.

Deputy Secretary of Labor Cinta Kaipat called the proclamation "a great day for us all

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Local

DOC commissioner rescues 2 stranded surfers

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

Department of Corrections Commissioner Lino S. Tenorio, together with a retired U.S. Army reservist, rescued two stranded surfers outside the reef line of Sugar Dock Saturday late afternoon.

Rescued were Nicolas Swaim, 31, and Kristina Springer, 27. Both were only exhausted and refused to be taken to the hospital.

The two were the 24th and 25th persons that Tenorio has rescued from the waters of Saipan in over 20 incidents stemming all way back to when he first became a police officer in 1980.

Department of Public Safety spokesperson Lei Ogumoro said that on Saturday at 5:53pm, DPS received a report that two stranded swimmers were rescued outside the channel of Sugar Dock.

Ogumoro said that based on preliminary investigation, Tenorio notified the police that he had picked up two surfers who were stranded near the reef line.

Boating Safety officers learned that the surfers—Swaim and Springer—were outside the reef line but when they decided to return to shore, strong waves and rip currents prevented them from doing so.

The two stayed close to the reef line for almost an hour when Tenorio, who was on his boat, spotted the two and rescued them.

Ogumoro said both surfers were advised to take extra precautions when surfing, especially during dangerous water conditions.

In a telephone interview with *Saipan Tribune* yesterday, Tenorio said he is just happy that he was at the right place at the right time.

Tenorio said the two victims, who were holding on to their surf boards, were actually taken out by the rough current.

"They were caught by surprise because the current was just super strong for them. They tried and tried to paddle away from exiting the channel. But unfortunately they were just taken out," the DOC commissioner said.

Tenorio recalled that he and retired U.S. Army reservist Rey Crisostomo were on their way back to shore from fishing when they saw the stranded surfers.

Tenorio and Crisostomo went bottom fishing that morning at the Esmeralda Reef, which is about 33 miles southwest of Saipan.

Tenorio said at 3pm they decided to go back to the shore as the water was becoming treacherously rough.

He said they were entering the Sugar Channel at 5:45pm when they saw the stranded surfers waving outside the main channel.

"They were like really in a state of panic, like calling for attention," he said.

Tenorio drove the boat next to the victims and Crisostomo immediately helped them get into the vessel.

"Big waves were coming every second. So we had to take the chance. They seemed pretty exhausted at the time," he said.

As soon as they brought the two inside the boat, Tenorio said he immediately contacted DPS.

Last year, Tenorio and a companion also rescued five locals who were stranded at the same location and almost at the same time.

He said that when he was a police officer, he was involved in rescue operations about 10 to 15 times, but mostly when he was off-duty.

When he retired from DPS, Tenorio rescued more persons from the waters about 10 times.

He said most of these incidents happened at the Sugar Dock channel.

Inos: Govt cuts include critical services

By KRISTI EATON
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REPORTER

Critical services, such as education, public health and public safety, are a part of Gov. Benigno R. Fitial's 5.5 percent budget cut to all government agencies, the Secretary of Finance said.

In a letter to the Legislature last week, Fitial said that budgets of all government agencies would be slashed beginning Jan. 1 due to dwindling government revenues and a lack of a budget. According to Fitial, the proportionate cut will help the government, which expects to collect $156.7 million, to finish the fiscal year in the black.

Finance Secretary Eloy Inos said the current cuts are the "first round." By law the budget must be reduced proportionately, he said.

After the proportionate cuts, the Executive Branch will see if money can be reallocated within the reprogramming authority to critical areas.

Reprogramming from non-critical to critical areas would be the "second round" of budget allocation, Inos said, adding that the Finance Department is working on calculating the expenditure numbers through Sept. 30—the end of the fiscal year—to establish trends and determine where to cut.

NEW STAFF
CNMI Delegate Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan poses with his Washington, D.C. staff: senior legislative assistant Arin Greenwood, office administrator Rose McDermott; chief of staff Bob Schwalbach; and legislative assistant Becky Lizama.
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

SILENCE IS DEADLY!

CERVICAL CANCER AWARENESS MONTH
JANUARY 2009

HEALTH WALK
(Saturday Healthy Heart Walk)
Taga Beach
January 3, 10, 17, 24, 31
FREE
Blood Pressure Check, Blood Sugar Check
Weight Monitoring, & Nutrition Counseling

RADIO STATION TRIVIA QUESTIONS
Every Saturday on Power 99, 101.1 FM, & 100.3 MAGIC
EDUCATION BOOTHS
Located at Tinian Health Center, Tinian Youth Center Post Office & Various Agencies.

TINIAN HEALTH FAIR
Saturday, January 10, 2009
TINIAN HEALTH CENTER
8:00 AM to 2:00 PM
EDUCATIONAL BOOTHS
FREE PAP SMEAR TESTING TO WOMEN WHO:
- Are 18 years of age and older
- Has resided in the CNMI for at least 1 year
- Meet BCSP income guidelines
- Has no medical insurance or has medical insurance that require a co-payment

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT PUBLIC HEALTH @ 433-9337
Tinian Mayor's Office – Community Outreach Program
CNMI Diabetes Prevention and Control Program

Student, 17, hurt after colliding with car

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

A 17-year-old student was injured after he collided with a vehicle as he was crossing near the intersection to Saipan International School in As Lito Tuesday morning.

The victim suffered multiple abrasions and lacerations to the face. He also sustained abrasions and complained of pain in the right arm, right leg, and neck.

Department of Public Safety spokesperson Lei Ogumoro said that no one was cited in the incident.

Ogumoro said that, according to traffic investigators, the boy did not use the marked crosswalk to cross the highway and failed to yield the right of way to vehicles.

"Speed and alcohol were not factors in this incident. The weather was cloudy and the road surface, including the shoulder, was wet," Ogumoro said.

DPS on Tuesday at 7:06am received a call about the accident that occurred along Martinez Road.

Preliminary investigation showed that a red 2004 Toyota Highlander operated by 41-year-old Paul W. Camacho was traveling south on Martinez Road.

As the vehicle was approaching the intersection to the Saipan International School, a Public School System bus was traveling north on the northbound lane.

Just as Camacho's vehicle was passing the bus, the boy ran from behind the bus and crossed the highway from the northbound shoulder lane.

When the pedestrian entered the southbound lane, he collided with Camacho's vehicle.

Camacho immediately called the police after he saw the pedestrian lying on the southbound lane.

Responding medics brought the victim to the Commonwealth Health Center. He was later released that day.

Ogumoro said that, according to traffic investigators, the PSS bus essentially obstructed the view for both Camacho and the pedestrian.

Ogumoro said the pedestrian was not a passenger of the PSS bus.

She said the vehicle had moderate damage on the left side.

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

MHS Class of '88 meeting set

This is to remind the Marianas High School Class of 1988 on their meeting will be held on Friday, Jan. 16, 2009, at the residence of Melvin P. & Eleanor A. Cepeda in As Lito. ***(PR)***

OES PTSA meeting set

The Parents Teachers Student Association officers of Oleai Elementary School would like to inform parents and guardians of Oleai Elementary School students that there will be a PTSA meeting on Tuesday, Jan. 13, 2009, at 6:16pm in the school cafeteria. ***(PR)***

Hopwood calendar of events

The Hopwood Junior High School will have its next PTSA meeting this Thursday, Jan. 8, 2009, from 6pm to 7pm in the cafeteria.

The Mid-Progress reports were issued to all students on Dec. 22, 2008. Parents are urged to review the reports.

The end of the second quarter will be on Jan. 30. The following week will be report card distribution (TBA). ***(PR)***

Fitial a no-show at Kilili's swearing-in rites

By KRISTI EATON
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REPORTER

Gov. Benigno Fitial, who traveled to Washington D.C. with his wife, Josie, for the swearing in of CNMI Delegate Gregorio "Kilili" Sablan, was unable to attend the ceremony.

Charles Reyes, press secretary for the Governor's Office, said scheduling conflicts were the reason for Fitial's absence.

Reyes said Fitial had planned to attend the official swearing in at 12pm, but the governor was told only Sablan's wife and children could attend that ceremony.

A mock swearing in for photo opportunities was held later in the day but Reyes said the governor was also unable to attend this because he was meeting with congressional staffers.

Sablan's staff members could not be reached in Washington D.C. to verify if the mock ceremony took place, but according to a press release, Sablan was sworn in at 2:20pm.

Those attending included Sablan's family, first CNMI Resident Representative Edward DLG Pangelinan; Pete A. Tenorio, the most recent Resident Representative; Allen Stayman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee; former CNMI assistant attorney general Jay Livingstone; Angie Borja; and Merced Aldan-Ada.

It was also unclear when a picture, provided to the media, was taken that included the abovementioned people as well as Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi; Insular Affairs Subcommittee chair Donna Christensen (D-VI); Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife and Oceans chair Madeleine Z. Bordallo (D-GU); Rita Sablan, education commissioner for the CNMI Public School System; and Lucy Blanco-Maratita, PSS Board of Education chairwoman.

Fitial was present at President Bush's 2pm announcement of the designation of the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument. Reyes said Fitial, after meeting with Bush during the announcement, saw Sablan.

The governor's absence was not meant as anything against Sablan, Reyes said, and the two have been spending a lot of time together, including having dinner the night of the swearing-in ceremony.

"They have been spending a lot of time together, but unfortunately, [Fitial] was not able to attend the official swearing in, which was limited, and he couldn't make the mock ceremony," Reyes said.

Senate President Pete Reyes and House Speaker Arnold Palacios were also invited to the swearing in but were unable to make it, according to an earlier press release.

Sablan said he does not choose who holds the office, but that it was important to invite all of them.

"I thought this was historical enough, not because I'm here, but because it's the first time for this office," Sablan added.

20-YEAR EMPLOYEES CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Manuela Demapan, Call Center supervisor, and David Duenas, Front Office manager, are honored during the Pacific Islands Club Saipan Annual Employee Party on Dec. 10, 2008, for having worked at PIC for 20 years. It was also PIC's 20-year anniversary. Demapan and Duenas are shown here with PIC General Manager Kieran Daly, center. Not in the picture but also celebrating 20 years with PIC are Angie V. Castro, Executive Administrative Assistant, and Violy Arriola, Call Center Agent.

Legislative leaders frustrated with last-minute budget veto

By KRISTI EATON
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REPORTER

House Speaker Arnold Palacios and Senate President Pete Reyes say they are upset Gov. Benigno Fitial "waited until the eleventh hour" to veto the fiscal year 2009 budget.

In a letter to Fitial, the two lawmakers said they were extremely disappointed to hear the governor vetoed the $165.4 million budget on Dec. 24. Fitial cited a drop of $8.7 million in projected revenue to justify the veto action.

"It is obvious that we have reached an impasse in the budget process, notwithstanding the Legislature's efforts to work with your administration," the letter states.

Presiding officers of the Legislature asked Fitial and the Finance Department to transmit revised revenue projections on several occasions, something that did not happen prior to the Legislature passing the budget on Dec. 4, Palacios and Reyes said.

"Subsequent to the passage of the Budget Act, the Secretary of Finance conveniently executes a memorandum revising the FY 2009 estimated resources on Dec. 19, 2008, which is the main basis of your decision to veto the Budget Act. Why wasn't the revised revenue estimate transmitted to the Legislature during the budget deliberations, where the Secretary of Finance was invited to participate in on several occasions?" they asked.

Also, they said, most of Fitial's concerns could have been dealt with without vetoing the entire Budget Act, and, according to the lawmakers, some of the governor's concerns originated from his own FY 2009 budget proposal. One of the examples they listed is the governor's concern that the Northern Marianas College was not appropriated a separate amount for utilities.

"The Budget Act provided that the utilities shall be paid from the 'all others' account of NMC because the governor's proposed budget failed to indicate a separate line item for NMC utilities," the legislators wrote.

Such concerns could have been alleviated using the governor's line item veto power, Palacios and Reyes wrote.

Without the Budget Act, they continue, government expenditures will continue using continuing appropriations, which with declining tax revenues usually means overspending and deficits.

The lawmakers also took umbrage at the recent FY 2008 budget revision. Initial numbers showed an $18 million deficit, but the Secretary of Finance revised those numbers after receiving cover-over taxes from the U.S. Treasury, thereby giving the CNMI a budget surplus of $110,000, "even though CNMI government lags far behind in its employer contributions to the NMI Retirement Fund."

Notwithstanding the cover-over funds, there was a $4.5 million revenue shortfall and $13.5 million overspending for FY 2008—something, they said, that is unacceptable for the Commonwealth.

"For that reason, the Legislature remains adamant and committed to enacting a budget for FY 2009. Expenditures must be controlled and such expenditures can only truly be controlled and monitored by enacting a Budget Act for FY 2009 and every year thereafter," Palacios and Reyes said.

Lastly, the two lawmakers said they were disappointed by the veto because "you constantly request for assistance and cooperation of the Legislature… [h]owever, when the Legislature passes legislation to address such problems, it appears that you do not approve of the proposed legislative action."

Woman allegedly stole, forged Tinian Municipal checks

The Attorney General's Office has charged a woman who allegedly stole and conspired with other persons to steal and forge checks belonging to the Tinian Municipal Treasurer.

Marla Cruz Sablan, 28, was charged with theft by failure to make required disposition of funds received and conspiracy.

Sablan, a resident of Tinian, was summoned to appear and answer the charges in the CNMI Superior Court on Jan. 9 at 9am.

Chief Prosecutor Kevin Lynch stated in the charging information that on July 22, 2008, Sablan purposely obtained Tinian Municipal Treasurer's check written to Pacific Telecom Inc. in the amount of $931.04.

Lynch said that between February through July 2008 on Tinian, Sablan agreed with Donovan SN Borja and Leslie Ann SN Macaranas to facilitate the commission of forgery and theft of a check from the Tinian Municipal Treasurer to Three Way International Inc. for $213.

No other details were given in court documents.

In other court news, Lynch also filed charges against a resident of Tanapag who allegedly received stolen copper wire belonging to the CNMI government.

Clarence Rabauliman Amirez, 29, was charged with receiving stolen property.

Lynch said that on July 9, 2008 Amirez received and retained copper wires that belonged to the government, knowing it had been stolen.

Amirez was summoned to appear and answer the charges in the Superior Court on Jan. 29 at 9am. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

T&E in Motion
PT
01.09.09

BUSH

From Page 1

ana Trench and the waters and corals surrounding three uninhabited islands in the Northern Mariana Islands, Rose Atoll in American Samoa and seven islands strung along the equator in the central Pacific Ocean.

"For sea birds and marine life, they will be sanctuaries to grow and thrive. For scientists, they will be places to extend the frontiers of discovery. And for the American people, they will be places that honor our duty to be good stewards of the Almighty's creation," Bush said.

He said the benefits extend beyond nature, to preserve culturally and spiritually significant sites for native peoples and allow new economic benefits in the territories.

The president also used his announcement to broadly defend his environmental record, which has consistently come under fierce attack during his eight years in office from conservation groups and other critics.

"The new steps I've announced today are the capstone of an eight-year commitment to strong environmental protection and conservation. I know that sounds contrary to the conventional wisdom of many," Bush said.

AP PHOTO/J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE

President George W. Bush is hugged by U.S. Commonwealth Northern Mariana Islands Gov. Benigno R. Fitial after Bush.

Fitial statement on designation

I welcome President Bush's historic announcement establishing the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument. On behalf of the people of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, I look forward to joining the President today for the official signing of the Monument Proclamation.

All of us in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands appreciate this recognition of our unique natural and geological environment. We anticipate that this designation will encourage and support scientific and educational programs that will enlighten people all over the world regarding the Mariana Trench, hydrothermal vents, and coral reefs now protected as parts of the Monument.

Over the past few months, I have been actively engaged in discussions with the White House Council on Environmental Quality regarding the objectives and scope of the proposed monument. I have been joined in these discussions by President Pete Reyes of the Commonwealth Senate and Speaker Arnold Palacios of the Commonwealth House of Representatives. Our objectives in these conservations were very simple: to put aside the very divisive advocacy of the PEW Foundation on this subject and to focus on the need to protect the interests of the people of the Commonwealth.

I would like to commend the Council on Environmental Quality and its Chairman, James Connaughton, for the care and attention that they brought to this project. They listened to our concerns. They reexamined the initial range of proposals in light of these concerns and worked constructively to address them. I believe that the end result is an example of how federal and local officials can work together productively to achieve a common objective.

First, the Monument designation focuses on the area necessary for the proper care and management of these unique resources—which ranks it high among the nation's largest conservation areas. As Chairman Connaughton has pointed out, however, there did not appear to be significant additional conservation benefit to gain from some proposals to extend the boundaries to the full extent of the United States exclusive economic zone.

Second, the designation prohibits commercial fishing only within the large area surrounding the three northern islands included in the Monument which are already protected by the CNMI Constitution.

Third, the designation defers to the local Commonwealth government to determine what traditional indigenous fishing should take place within this protected area.

Fourth, the designation does not conflict with areas where potential mineral deposits are most likely to be found.

Fifth, the Administration has committed to support legislation giving the Commonwealth control over its submerged lands and to develop legislation providing economically beneficial access to mineral deposits on federal submerged lands.

Finally, the Monument Proclamation provides for full participation by the Commonwealth in the co-management of the monument. We look forward to participating in the Advisory Council and as cooperating agencies over the next two years and beyond to help develop the management plans and regulations that will implement the President's Proclamation to achieve our shared conservation goals.

LOCAL

From Page 1

and for the world," saying she is very proud of the team and everyone who worked hard to make it happen.

The group claims that Gov. Benigno Fitial, House Speaker Arnold Palacios and Senate President Pete P. Reyes have dropped their fierce opposition to the proposal and have joined the 6,000 petition signers, 206 businesses, and nearly 600 letter writers who had asked Bush to designate the area as a new monument. Fitial later released a statement supporting the designation ***(see sidebar at left).***

Rep. Bordallo said she recognizes the President's intent to protect the natural resources and ocean ecosystem while also attempting to address the concerns of the fishermen on Guam but she does not believe that this process was as inclusive and consultative as she would have preferred.

She said the Mariana Trench is an extraordinarily geologically rich resource and a special area of the ocean for undersea life that can best be protected with increased consultation and cooperation between federal and local authorities.

She said she wants more consultation under the new leadership of Barack Obama with the governments of Guam and the CNMI as the management plan for this new monument is developed.

"I understand that the monument is modified to address concerns that I and other leaders raised about regulation of fishing in the waters off of Guam. While the portion of the new monument in the waters near Guam is confined to submerged features and is less restrictive than originally proposed, I remain concerned about the effect of this monument designation on local sovereignty," she said.

Bordallo vowed to continue to work through her Committee on Natural Resources to ensure that all stakeholders have a voice in the development of the management plan.

In applauding the decision, the Western and Pacific Network based in Honolulu, Hawaii, said local organizations had important role in protecting three Pacific ecosystems.

The network said organizations and individuals in Hawaii took part in the October, 2008 meeting in Honolulu with representatives of James Connaughton, chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, and are very supportive of it.

American Memorial Park superintendent Sarah Creachbaum said it is her understanding that the new monument will be managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

"Management of the new monument is going to be a very challenging task. In order for it to be successful the managing agency will have to work very closely with the community on Saipan," she said.

The Division of Fish and Wildlife in the CNMI has yet to respond to queries about its future role, especially in the enforcement aspects.

The Division of Environment Quality preferred to direct such concerns to the Office of the Governor, when asked for reactions.

Department of Public Lands Secretary John Del Rosario, who initially opposed the proposal, said the marine monument had been scaled down substantially below the original Pew proposal. He said there are trade-offs on what the local government agreed to, including the likely approval of a nine-mile territorial waters and the return of CNMI submerged land.

"I understand that the resources in the area designated for the monument remains in the hands of the people of these islands. It's a good decision, signifying that Washington has begun listening to the sentiments of the silent majority here," DelRosario said.

Deputy Secretary Melvin O. Faisao said he appreciates the governors' effort to participate in the process of defending and representing on behalf of the interests of the CNMI government and the people.

He said indigenous fishing rights and access will not be unduly compromised.

A LANDMARK

From Page 1

Sablan took his oath of office at 2:20pm Tuesday in Washington D.C. (5:20am Wednesday Saipan time), standing on the floor of the House of Representatives with other members of the 111th Congress. Before then, the CNMI was the only part of the United States that did not have representation in the national legislature.

"Today is a landmark day in Commonwealth history," said Sablan. "Today our islands become full-fledged members of the American political family."

Sablan's wife, Andrea, and their children, Patricia and Jesse, witnessed the historic swearing-in in Washington, D.C. Other key figures in Marianas history witnessed the swearing-in as well. These included Edward Dlg. Pangelinan, the chief negotiator for the Marianas Political Status Commission and the first Resident Representative for NMI, and Pete A. Tenorio, a member of the Political Status Commission and the CNMI's last Resident Representative.

Tenorio donated the Commonwealth's seal to the new congressional office; it now hangs in the office's foyer.

Allen Stayman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, Jay Livingstone, Angie Borja, and Medced Aldan-Ada also attended Delegate-elect Sablan's swearing-in and the open house held at the NMI's new congressional office, in room 423 of the Canon Building.

"The people of the Northern Mariana Islands have waited over 30 years for the full participation of our citizens in Congress," said Pangelinan. "To a large measure this fulfills the Covenant commitment that we will be participating fully as a self-governing Commonwealth within the American family."

"It is amazing," said Sablan's daughter Patricia. "This is history."

Sablan's son, Jesse, took a break from moving furniture to the new congressional office to contemplate his father's new job. "I'm just really nervous and hoping that he does well."

'Humbling'

Sablan said his first day at the CNMI's first congressman was a humbling experience.

"The fact that I took my oath and am now a member of Congress representing the people of the Northern Mariana Islands, that was a humbling experience," Sablan said a few hours after being sworn in.

It has been years in the making, he said. "First we were a Trust Territory. Then the Covenant was approved and we were a Commonwealth. And now we have a seat in Congress. The Covenant gave us autonomy, but up until now the Feds could pass laws affecting the Marianas without us having a say. Now we have a role in making those laws," he said.

The day's events also showed how small the world can be, he said.

Phillip Burton, who preceded House Speaker Nancy Pelosi as a member of California's 5th (later changed to 8th) district, was responsible for the passage of the Covenant, Sablan told Pelosi when he spoke with her during his swearing in ceremony.

"That's a complete circle," he said.

Sablan then learned that the pastor of Pelosi's church is a friend of Bishop Tomas Camacho. Camacho provided the Bible for Sablan to use in the ceremony.

"So you know it's a small world," he said.

Priorities

One of the first things Sablan is going to be working on with his staff is the stimulus package, he said. Not only will infrastructure affect the CNMI, but also other policies can affect the people of the Northern Marianas, he added.

"We need to remain mindful that some economic policies that will apply in the nation will not make such an impact in the Marianas and other territories," he said.

Sablan said he is looking at some tax issues.

"Not everyone in the Marianas pays taxes. Some of the people who need the greatest help will be left out of any tax credit policy that they could put in the package. So we need to make sure those people are taken care of," he said, adding that he and his staff will work with other members of Congress on the issue.

As for Bush's announcement of the Marianas Trench National Monument, the new congressman said he would have preferred it be done with a sanctuary, but is happy with the compromise.

"It's done. They made that declaration," he said, adding that it's time to move on and think about the long term.

Federalization

Sablan also will be meeting with officials from the Department of Homeland Security on the issue of federalization. He first met with them in November.

"I am talking with other members about having another meeting with the Department of Homeland Security to see what the plans are," he said. "I am cognizant of the fact that there are certain situations going on with the federalization of immigration that may limit the amount of information they can share. As of today, I am a part of the federal government. We have discussed some of the issues that are of concern to the Northern Marianas Islands."

Sablan's wife and children will be heading back to the CNMI soon, he said. Although he will reside in Washington, the Commonwealth will always be his home and he will visit as often as possible.

"I will be traveling as much as I can. It's just a little difficult because we're so far away," he said. "But when necessary I will come to the Northern Marianas. I will be coming often enough to know what it going on."

'Rota charters as yet unaffected by Japan recession'

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSISTANT EDITOR

Charter flights to Rota appear to be unaffected by the economic downturn in Japan, according to Pacific Development, Inc.

PDI president Yoichi Matsumura said the holiday packages the company organized with parent company, KNT Kinki Nippon Tourist Co., Ltd., are doing fine and that the last two charter flights to the Commonwealth's southernmost chain were in fact fully booked.

"For the last two charter flights that came in, it was fully booked, carrying 150 passengers per flight. The yearend and New Year Rota charter flights are doing well as it was the first time these flights were made to Rota. These flights have had a big effect on Rota. Besides, the Rota charter subscriptions and marketing efforts were carried out comparatively earlier than Saipan and Guam destinations," he said in an e-mail to the *Saipan Tribune*.

Matsumura said another flight charter flight to Rota is arriving today, Jan. 8. He said the flight will be carrying tourists from the Hokkaido-Sapporo area and, like the first two, is expected to be fully booked.

The longtime CNMI tourism executive, however, said that while the numbers for these three flights are encouraging, he does expect some rough sailing ahead in the coming months.

"In spite of the tough recession in Japan, the yearend and New Year flights to Rota were not affected since they were the first direct charters this year. [However,] service will definitely be affected by the recession. Regular flights are [already] selling at cheaper prices in our neighboring island of Guam as well as on Saipan. It will also be tight for Rota."

Matsumura, however, is confident that his company and the CNMI will weather the storm.

"With the same support coming from the CNMI and Rota governments, the Marianas Visitors Authority, as well as Rota Resort Hotel, PDI will continue its interest in the Rota charter."

PDI and KNT announced last February that it will bring in 40 new charter flights to Rota in the next couple of years.

The Rota charter flight are expected to bring in some 8,000 tourists to Rota in about a year. KNT has chartered Continental Airlines to bring in the Rota flights. Continental Airlines has been using its 155-seater Boeing 737 aircraft to service the island.

NEW GRADUATE CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Brandi Salas graduated from University of Hawaii at Manoa on Dec. 20, 2008, with double major in Journalism and Spanish. She has been accepted and will pursue graduate studies at same university. Picture shows, from left, mother Roxy Salas, new graduate Brandi Salas, father Carlos Salas, and brother Brentt.

Toyota, Nissan, Mazda are Top 3 makes in 2008

Toyota, Nissan, and Mazda finished as the Top 3 makes of automobiles on Saipan , last year selling 269, 82, and 58 units, respectively.

Sold by Microl Corp., 178 Toyota cars, 15 trucks, 12 vans, and 164 sports utility vehicles were sold in the period from January-December 2007.

Saipan drivers, meanwhile, drove off with 35 cars, 17 trucks, one van, and 29 SUVs made by Nissan last year. Joeten Motors distributes Nissan locally.

Mazda automobiles sold by Triple J Motors, meanwhile, were broken down as follows: 37 cars, seven trucks, four vans, and 10 SUVs.

Other makes of cars sold in 2008, with the number of units sold, are the following: Ford (45), Honda (41), Hyundai (31), Kia (24), Mitsubishi (20), Chevrolet (14), Blue Bird (6), and Suzuki (5).

Microl Corp. sells Chevrolet, while Joeten Motors sells Ford, Honda, and Kia. Triple J Motors sells Hyundai, Mitsubishi, Blue Bird, and Suzuki.

In all, CADA experienced a 5.85-percent decrease in new car sales in 2008 as it sold 595 units compared to 632 in 2007.

In related news, the Commonwealth Auto Dealers Association also sold a total of 371 used cars last year. Microl Corp. sold the most second-hand units with 141, followed by Joeten Motors with 122, and Triple J Motors with 108.

For December 2008, CADA sold 27 used cars with Microl Corp. selling 11 and Joeten Motors and Triple J eight apiece. ***(Mark Rabago)***

Tudela to attend 77th US Conference of Mayors

By NAZARIO RODRIGUEZ JR.
n_rodriguez@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Mayor Juan B. Tudela is set to attend the 77th Winter Meeting of the United States Conference of Mayors from Jan.17 to 19 at the Capital Hilton Hotel in Washington D.C.

Some of the major issues in the annual conference involve urban planning and polices, criminal and social justice, jobs, education, and the workforce.

Participants will also discuss international affairs, tourism, arts, parks, entertainment and sports.

The various conference committees representing a wide range of issues will report their work in the past year right on the first day of sessions.

Some of these committees include community development and housing, children's health and human services, environment. and transportation and communications.

Also during the first day, new mayors and first time attendees of the meeting would be introduced to the session.

After a plenary breakfast for the mayors and business leaders on the second day of the meeting, awards will be presented for the USCM Excellence in Public and Private Partnership.

Workshops will also be held as well as separate meetings for various task forces and closed-door meeting for the USCM Executive Committee members and another closed-door meeting for the Republican mayors and local officials.

CRIME OF THE WEEK

Copper wire theft

Crime Stoppers is seeking the community's assistance for information on any of the person(s) responsible for a recent copper wire theft incident: On Tuesday, Dec. 30, 2008, DPS received a call at 1:02pm about a copper wire theft incident at the Retsa Building in As Gonno. According to preliminary investigation, an unknown person(s) stole about 40-50 feet of copper wire from an electrical panel box located on the exterior side of the building. The copper wires were last seen in the panel box on Dec. 27, 2008 at 6am. This case is pending investigation.

Anyone having information about these crimes, call the Crime Stoppers hotline at 234-7272. Crime Stoppers pays cash rewards up to $1,000 for information leading to an arrest. Caller ID is not used. All calls remain anonymous. ***(NMI Crime Stoppers)***

SPRING 2009 DATES

Jan. 8	Registration for Spring 2009 graduating candidates (1pm to 5pm)
Jan. 12-16	Open registration for Spring 2009 semester (9am to 6pm; must have English & Math Placement Level to register)
Jan. 17	Late registration (9am to 12pm)
Jan. 20	First day of instruction

NMC registration begins next week

Registration for the Northern Marianas College's Spring 2009 Semester will begin on Monday, Jan. 12, 2009, and will continue until Jan. 17, 2009.

New students are required to take an English and Math placement test before they register. The schedule of placement tests and the Spring 2009 class schedule can be found online at www.nmcnet.edu. Students who anticipate on graduating in May 2009 can register for classes on Jan. 8, 2009, from 1pm to 5pm.

Those who have not applied for admission can still do so by visiting the College's Office of Admissions and Records and picking up an application form. Application forms can also be downloaded from the NMC website.

Application for admissions will be accepted until the last day of Registration, which is Jan. 17, 2009, provided that both placement tests have been taken.

For more information regarding admissions or registration, contact OAR at 234-5498 Ext 1537 or email oar@nmcnet.edu. ***(NMC)***

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Guam's Bordallo is sworn in for a fourth term

WASHINGTON, D.C.— Guam Delegate Madeleine Z. Bordallo yesterday took the oath of office administered by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi alongside her colleagues elected to the 111th Congress.

Among the new members taking office is the first ever Delegate from the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Rep. Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan. Sablan's office is next door to Bordallo's office on the 4th floor of the historic Cannon House Office Building on Capitol Hill.

Both Bordallo and Sablan hosted "open houses" yesterday in recognition of the convening of the new Congress. Members of the Guam and CNMI communities residing in the greater Washington D.C. Metropolitan area gathered on Capitol Hill for the occasion.

Pelosi, acting on the recommendations of the Democratic

Bordallo

Steering and Policy Committee, announced that Bordallo would continue to serve on the House Armed Services Committee under chair Ike Skelton and on the House Natural Resources Committee under chair Nick J. Rahall.

Bordallo will also continue to serve on the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus under Caucus chair Mike Honda where she remains the secretary and chairwoman of the Health Task Force.

As her first legislative act of the 111th Congress, Bordallo re-introduced the Guam World War II Loyalty Recognition Act as her first legislative priority for the new Congress. The Guam War Claims Act is H.R. 44 and includes 83 original co-sponsors. In the previous Congress, the bill successfully passed in the House of Representatives during the 110th Congress but stalled in the U.S. Senate.

"I look forward to working with my colleagues in the 111th Congress on issues important to the people of Guam," Bordallo said. "I will continue to work for recognition for the people of Guam who endured the occupation of Guam through the passage of H.R. 44, the Guam World War II Loyalty Recognition Act. H.R. 44 is my top legislative priority and I will work to pass the bill in the House of Representatives and the Senate.

"Congress will continue to exercise oversight of the preparations for the Marine relocation from Okinawa to Guam. The military buildup on Guam must be implemented in a manner that takes our community's concerns into consideration and that benefits our entire island community.

"I am also working to ensure that the proposed economic stimulus bill that Congress is working to pass at the request of President-elect Obama addresses Guam's infrastructure needs, especially in light of the challenges posed by the military buildup," she said. ***(PR)***

Deleon Guerrero named Humanities Council chief

The NMI Council for the Humanities has announced the appointment of Antonio V. Deleon Guerrero as its new executive director.

Deleon Guerrero

Council chair Dr. Debra T. Cabrera said Deleon Guerrero's appointment was effective Jan. 5. He replaces the Council's previous executive director, Paz C. Younis, who retired in 2008.

Deleon Guerrero comes to the Council with extensive management and administrative experience in the fields of education and the visitor industry. He holds a bachelor's degree in Hotel Administration, a master's degree in Educational Leadership, and an honorary doctorate degree from Soka University in Tokyo.

Before joining the Council, Deleon Guerrero served as president of Northern Marianas College from February 2004 until his retirement in August 2006.

Prior to his appointment as president, Deleon Guerrero served in a number of faculty and administrative posts at NMC over an 18-year career, including dean of Professional Programs, dean of Community Programs and Services, and director of Institutional Development.

CONTACT INFO
Web site: www.nmihumanities.org
Staff: 234-4785

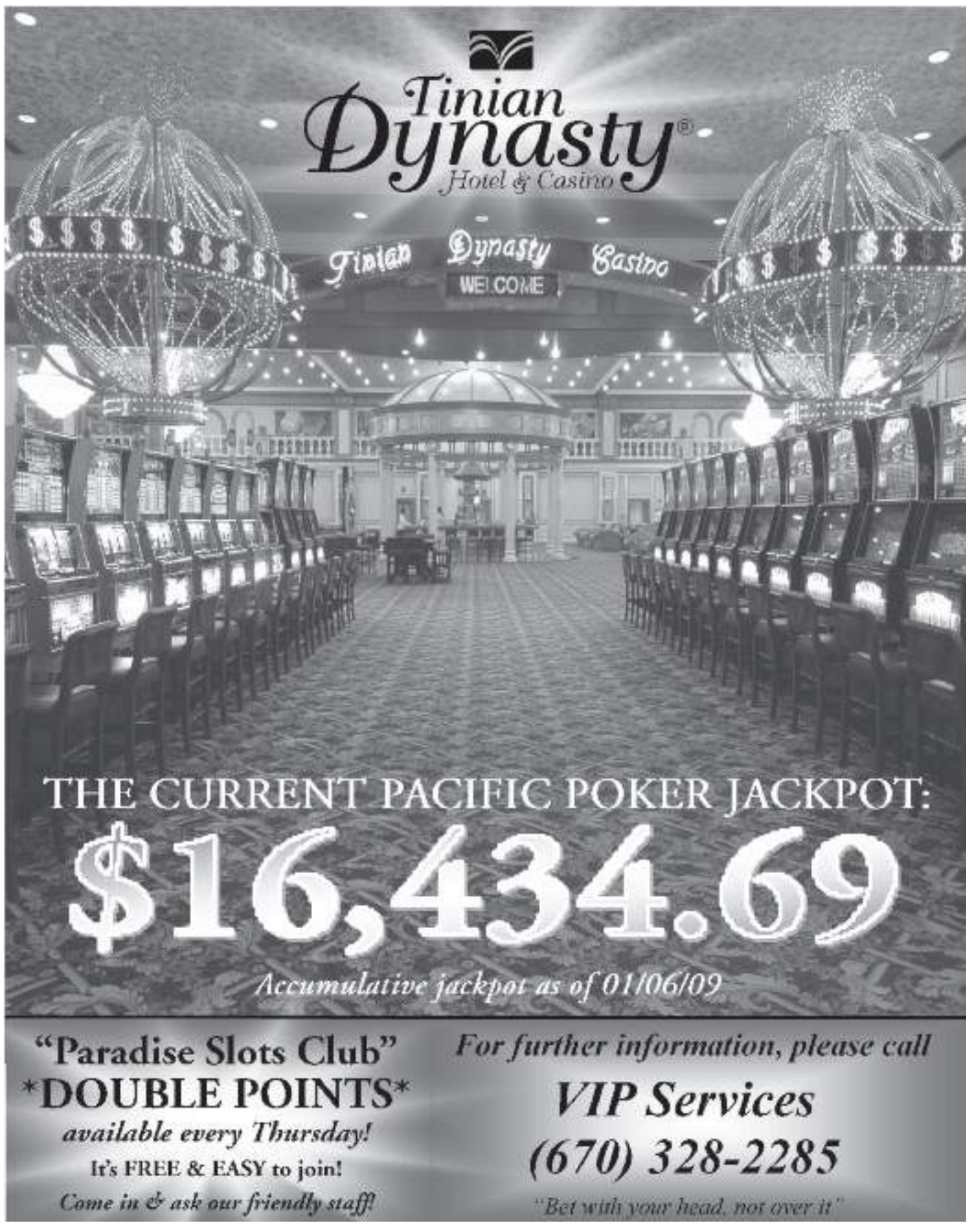
Deleon Guerrero has also been active in a variety of professional and community service activities.

Cabrera noted that the Council was fortunate to have an executive director with Deleon Guerrero's experience. "The Council is a small organization but one with an important mission. Mr. Deleon Guerrero brings a wealth of experience to the Council that will help us to improve the quality and diversity of our humanities programming."

The Humanities Council is a private, non-profit corporation established in the Commonwealth in 1991. It is affiliated with and receives annual grant support from the National Endowment for the Humanities. NEH is dedicated to supporting research, education, preservation and other public programs in the humanities.

The Council's mission is to foster awareness, understanding, and appreciation of the humanities through support of educational programs that relate the humanities to the indigenous cultures and to the intellectual needs of the people of the Commonwealth.

For more information on the Council, visit its Web site at www.nmihumanities.org or contact staff at 234-4785.



Kristo Rai parish priest goes on a monthlong vacation

By NAZARIO RODRIGUEZ JR.
n_rodriguez@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The parish priest of Kristo Rai church is scheduled to leave Saipan this afternoon, not because of a permanent re-assignment but for a monthlong vacation in the Philippines.

In a telephone conversation yesterday, Fr. Glen Ragsag disproved speculations that he had been booted out from his post and that he is going home permanently.

Ragsag said he is going home just to unwind because there was no chance for him to do so during the holidays.

He urged people to refrain from making false statements about his trip because it is just a vacation.

"There were just some misinterpretations," he said.

He said this is the time to heal wounds and he hopes that things would become brighter once he returns.

He said his plane ticket shows that he is set to come back to Saipan on Feb. 11.

It would be recalled that Ragsag was dragged into the center of a controversy at the Kristo Rai Church when a member of the Parish Pastoral Council allegedly berated and humiliated in public a female Filipino church worker after the Dawn Mass on Dec. 27.

The council member allegedly told the worker that the Kristo Rai church is not for Filipinos and told her that she can "tell that to the priest, I don't care."

According to reports, the council was also attempting to petition for the removal of Ragsag as parish priest.

Bishop Tomas A. Camacho met with Ragsag and the council members a day after the incident was reported in the media.

The bishop could not be reached for comment as of press time.

DPW to give away free compact fluorescent light bulbs

The Department of Public Works' Energy Division will be giving away free compact fluorescent light bulbs on Friday, Jan. 16, at the Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center from 9am to 4pm.

The Energy Division will give away two fluorescent light bulbs per consumer as part of their "Energy Star" Awareness Project and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands' participation in the "Change the World, Start with 'Energy Star'" national campaign

The cornerstone of this campaign is the "Energy Star" - Change a Light Pledge, which encourages everyone to participate by taking small steps that make a big difference and by challenging people to "do more" to help fight global warming with more energy-efficient choices at home and at work

ON THE NET

www.energystar.gov/changetheworld

This promotion is available to all residential paying customers of the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. and therefore must provide a copy of their CUC utility bill to receive the two free CFL's.

Energy Division director Thelma Inos encourages everyone to be a part of the solution in protecting the environment by simply changing at least one Energy Star-qualified CFL. By making one change, you can save about $30 or more in electricity costs over the bulb's lifetime. The Energy Star-qualified CFL bulbs use about 75 percent less energy than standard incandescent bulbs and last up to 10 times longer.

For more information regarding the free CFLs, call the Energy Division at 664-4480/1. If you need more information about Energy Star, visit the website at www.energystar.gov/changetheworld.

This project is made possible through a grant from the U.S. Department of Energy, State Energy Program. ***(PR)***

So far so good for Athlete's Foot Guam

Less than six months after opening The Athlete's Foot Guam, its master franchisee, Joeten Enterprises Inc., said that things are looking up for the Tamuning outlet.

"It's going great. Like everything else, it just needs the right promotions and all that stuff. But Guam is a little different than the CNMI. They're having their own economic recession," said the company's corporate special project manager, Bo Palacios.

He added that The Athlete's Foot Guam is experiencing challenges in the U.S. territory that its older counterparts on Saipan didn't have to go through.

"We're the new kids on the block [in Guam]. We're still learning and we're going to try some collaborative things out and we hope that our Athlete's Foot in Guam will be as successful as our Athlete's Foot on Saipan."

He added that Guam is a totally different market than the CNMI.

"It really is a very competitive market compared to the CNMI. One of the things that we do with our Athlete's Foot there is to compete in price with Foot Locker, which isn't easy to do. But we do have a few advantages… since we're not in a mall."

The Athlete's Foot Guam is located in the Star Building Shopping Center along Marine Corps Drive.

"Like everything, everyone thinks they could do better in business so the Athlete's Foot Guam is nothing different. But we're optimistic about it," said Palacios.

The Athlete's Foot Guam opened last July 16 and is operating as a performance store, showcasing the latest store design, layout, and merchandise systems.

Joeten Enterprises, Inc. opened its first The Athlete's Foot on Saipan way back in 1989. ***(Mark Rabago)***

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Sun Palace Hotel manager Shirley Kim shakes hands with local artist Marconi Calindas during a turnover event at the Susupe hotel for the 44 in. by 36 in. commissioned painting titled "Sun Flower and Friends 3." Sun Palace joins the community in supporting local artists based in the CNMI.

NMC holds admissions workshop

Students who need additional assistance or guidance in filling out the Northern Marianas College's application for admission are strongly encouraged to attend the free Admissions Workshop scheduled from 9am to 11am on Saturday, January 10, 2009, in Room N5.

At the workshop, representatives of the College's Office and Admissions and Records will be providing helpful information about different degree and certificate programs and financial aid information. They will also personally assist prospective students fill out the application form and other important documents. There will be no formal agenda for the workshop; prospective students can come in anytime between 9am and 11am and a member of the OAR department will assist them.

Individuals who attend this free admission workshop will qualify to have their application fee and their placement test fees waived for the Spring 2009 semester. This represents a savings of about $75.

NMC offers several degree and certificate programs, including a bachelor of science degree in elementary education, associate degrees in business, liberal arts, nursing, natural resource management, criminal justice, hospitality management, and more. Moreover, it offers certificate programs in different vocational, academic, and professional areas.

The admission workshop is open to everyone, including graduating seniors and their parents, government and private sector employees, international students, and members of the general public.

Application for admissions will be accepted until the last day of registration, which is Jan. 17, 2009, provided that both placement tests have been taken. The dates for the placement tests, as well as other pertinent information, can be found at www.nmcnet.edu. ***(NMC)***

BoG participates in college scholarship program

HAGATNA, Guam—For the sixth consecutive year, the Bank of Guam is offering local high school seniors an opportunity to apply for up to $5,000 in grants through its participation with the 2009 Education Exchange College Grant Program.

Totaling $50,000 in grants nationally for 2009, the Education Exchange Program is open to all college-bound, high school seniors graduating this year. Applicants must be U.S. citizens and able to provide written acceptance to an accredited 4-year college by May 15, 2009. Other information includes an official copy of the high school transcript and two letters of recommendation.

Applications are available at all Bank of Guam branches, and have been distributed to Guam's high schools.

Students must mail their completed applications and supporting documents directly to the ACCEL/Exchange Network in New Jersey. The application package must be postmarked not later than March 16, 2009.

A total of four $5,000 grants and 30 $1,000 grants will be awarded by July 2009.

Under the ACCEL/Exchange Education Exchange Program, a total of 7 Guam students have been selected in the national process for a total of $11,000. In 2008, 2 Academy of Our Lady of Guam students each were awarded $1,000, while in 2006, three Guam students were awarded a record $7,000. Guam's winners in 2004 and 2005 each won $1,000. ***(PR)***

3 from Kiribati adrift for 24 days

HONIARA, Solomon Islands (Solomon Star/PIR)—Three men from Kiribati who drifted without food and water for 24 days at sea arrived safely in Honiara yesterday after a fishing vessel rescued them.

They are Turii Akau, 47, Tentoa Auatabu, 62, and Pastor Kakai Berekeman, 29.

Speaking through a translator, Berekeman said on 5 December last year they were traveling back in a 15 horsepower boat from Nonousi Island back to their island of Tapiteuea.

They were attending the funeral of Berekeman's father when the incident happened. The two islands, Nonousi and Tapiteuea, are located about an hour by boat apart.

On their way back at about 3pm, they caught up with rough seas and that was when it all started.

"We were caught up in the middle of the disaster till nightfall and we could not do anything," Berekeman said speaking in Kiribati language through his translator.

Berekeman added that the sea was very rough all throughout the night until day break so they could not do anything.

When it was break of dawn, he said they were in the middle of nowhere: no island, no nothing but only ocean. With their bit of fuel left they decided not to do anything but drift until they see any island.

However, he said that did not happen for the next 24 days. "Our food and water last us for only five days," he said.

He added that for the remaining days at sea they lived drinking their urine and salt-water.

"I told the other two that our only hope was God and if He decided that we die, we just have to trust Him," he said.

With their families faraway, the only thing they did every day was pray and believed in God. On the 26th of December, Boxing Day, Akau saw a fishing vessel.

He said they tried making signs for the ship for help but the ship ignored them.

With the little fuel left they used it to travel to the ship and that was when they were rescued.

"We thank God because without Him we will already be dead," Berekeman said.

Asked if they were married with kids, they said it was through their families' prayers that also saved them. "Our families are already aware that we are safe," he said.

The three men arrived here about 3am in Honiara onboard *Zhong Tai 1*, a fishing vessel.

When *Solomon Star* visited them yesterday, they looked very tired with their bodies covered with sun burn.

However, they were in good spirit. They are due to return to Kiribati next week after all their visas are processed in Fiji.

Solomons island of Sikaiana in dire need of relief

HONIARA, Solomon Islands (Solomon Star/PIR)—The Malaita outer Island of Sikaiana is in dire need to food relief, Malaita Province's Disaster Coordinator Pearson Simi said.

Mr. Simi, who led the multi agency team sent recently to Lord Howe and Pelau with relief supplies, said Sikaiana is also affected. He said Sikaiana was also hit by waves and many food gardens have been wiped out.

"During the assessment trip, we also found that Sikaiana people also suffered the same fate as those on Lord Howe and Pelau and are in need of relief supplies," he said.

Early last month, a huge wave hit Pelau and Lord Howe, destroying food gardens and left many hungry and homeless.

Meanwhile, Simi said the final assessment report has been compiled and is now with the Director of the National Disaster Management Office Loti Yates.

He said all agencies that sent their personnel, including medical and agriculture officers to Lord Howe Last month, have sent in their reports.

Simi said one of the recommendations in the report is for another team to be sent there.

"The team would consist of agriculture officers who would assist in reforming the people affected in growing crops," he said

Simi however said that further relief supplies are recommended for the people including those on Sikaiana.

SYDNEY FESTIVAL AP PHOTO/RICK RYCROFT

Swedish comedy magician Carl-Einar Hackner performs his routine with a harmonica in his mouth during a preview of La Clique at The Famous Spiegeltent for the Sydney Festival in Sydney, Australia, Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2009. The raunchy late-night vaudeville act will run through to Feb. 1.

PACIFIC BRIEFS

Major flood warning in PNG's Port Moresby

MELBOURNE, Australia (Radio Australia/PIR)—Papau New Guinea's National Weather Office has issued a flood warning for the capital Port Moresby and surrounding villages. The office has told the Post Courier newspaper that they are expecting the highest rise in sea levels ever seen in the area. The highest tidal surge is expected to be 2.89 meters above sea level, and is likely to cause widespread flooding in the lowlands. The high tides began Monday and will rise and fall dramatically over the next two weeks. Last month, the PNG government declared a national disaster after a combination of king tides and high seas displaced tens of thousands of people across seven provinces.

Tanis sworn in as president of Bougainville

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (RNZI/PIR)—Papua New Guinea's autonomous Bougainville region has begun the swearing-in ceremony of its newly-elected president, James Tanis, who was elected last month. The former Bougainville Revolutionary Army commander is Bougainville's second president after Joseph Kabui who died last June. Bougainvilleans from all corners of the island have arrived in traditional costumes in the former capital, Arawa, for his inauguration. Tanis, who is from Panam Village in Lamane, on the border of South and Central Bougainville, was a key player in forging the 2001 peace agreement to end the long-running civil war.

Kiribati seeks increased air service

MELBOURNE, Australia (Radio Australia/PIR)—The island nation of Kiribati is trying to increase the number of international flights that service it. The government of Kiribati has asked for expressions of interest from airlines across the Pacific for the provision of both international services to Tarawa, and the other major population centre, Christmas Island, Kiribati is also requesting domestic services linking the two destinations and to other internal destinations. Kiribati currently has only one international air service, with Fiji-based Air Pacific providing two flights a week between its capital Tarawa, and Nadi, after Nauru based Our Airline cancelled its Brisbane to Tarawa service in June last year. Air Pacific has confirmed it has been informed of the expression of interests, and it is interested in providing this service in the future.

Political deadlock once again in French Polynesia

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (RNZI/PIR)—The three main political leaders in French Polynesia are due to meet today for a third time in less than a month in a bid to break a political deadlock. The opposition's Gaston Flosse and Oscar Temaru have met again ahead of today's scheduled encounter with President Gaston Tong Sang, whose majority in the assembly was lost a month ago when one of his backers decided to pull out of his coalition. This has left the ruling To Tatou Aia coalition with 28 seats, which is the same level of support the opposition has.

Flashback

A LOOK BACK AT PAST YEARS' HEADLINES

January 8, 1999

PSS travels cost $400K

The Public School System has spent $417,256.76 for travels from October 1997 to December 1998, and Board of Education members say this does not speak well of the school system at this time when the education budget is running short. BOE member Ester Fleming calls the spending "excessive." "This looked like we satisfied ourselves first," Fleming said. The funds were drawn from local and federal sources and went toward training of staff and BOE members and attendance of conferences.

Investors propose clinic for Japanese

A group of Japanese investors met with two key government officials yesterday to discuss a proposal to convert the Royal Taga Hotel into a clinic to cater to the elderly Japanese in the CNMI. The plan is expected to drive up tourist arrivals from Japan and resuscitate the ailing CNMI tourist industry. The investors, whose company was not known as of press time, made initial discussions with Marianas Visitors Authority board Chairman David M. Sablan and Health Secretary Joseph Kevin Villagomez. Their meeting was closed to the press.

January 8, 2001

Wiseman named Superior Court judge

Gov. Pedro P. Tenorio has nominated prominent lawyer David A. Wiseman to the Superior Court to fill a vacancy following the appointment last year of Justice John A. Manglona to the Supreme Court. The governor submitted his name last Thursday to the Senate Committee on Executive Appointments and Governmental Investigations for his confirmation. Mr. Wiseman, 58, expressed elation for the appointment, saying being a judge has long been a goal and aspiration after spending most of his professional life in the CNMI.

CPA backs economic revitalization plan

The Commonwealth Ports Authority strongly supports the economic revitalization plan of the CNMI government, as it ensured cooperation so long as the agency's capability to meet its debt requirements is not compromised. Board Chair Roman S. Palacios said a detailed analysis of the ports authority's projected revenues and expenditures was specifically made to determine whether CPA can heed to calls for lower airport charges. According to Mr. Palacios, the financial review showed a modest increase in actual revenues compared to budgeted expenses which allowed CPA to adjust airport rates and extend the implementation of the Airline Incentive Program.

January 8, 2002

Teachers, parents discuss proper childcare

The Public School System and the Department of Public Health yesterday gathered teachers and parents throughout the island for a whole-day conference on early childhood care that was presented by the HeadStart Program. The Second Annual Health Symposium, "Show you care, Stay Healthy, Live Healthy" seminar, which was held at the Saipan Diamond Hotel, gathered education and medical experts in presenting a variety of techniques on childcare. Experts tackled the importance of prenatal care, postpartum care and immunization. They also discussed ways to prevent the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, as well as the importance of dental care and the five strategies of the Virtues Project.

'Changes in Senate leadership unlikely'

Sen. Joaquin G. Adriano yesterday branded as "bogus" earlier reports that senator-elect Diego M. Songao and Sen. Ramon Guerrero will be joining the Republican Party to ensure a GOP-controlled Senate in the 13th Legislature. Adriano insisted that the original composition of the 13th Senate leadership is still intact "and that it's going to remain like that. There are no changes." This comes even as rumors continue to fly over a possible upset in the Senate leadership in the run-up to the January 14 inauguration. Earlier reports said Songao, a Covenant Party member from Rota, and Guerrero, an Independent from Saipan, are being wooed to join the GOP to give the Republican Party majority control of the upper chamber.

JOETEN 60th ANNIVERSARY

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Gualo Rai Commercial Center
Middle Road Tel: 235-9322 - Fax: 235-9325

SAN VICENTE BRANCH
San Vicente Road
Tel: 234-3176 - Fax: 235-0007

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
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EDITORIAL

A monumental decision: Bush becomes the conservation president, at least at sea

Yes, you read that right. A man whose administration doesn't exactly have a green seal of approval from environmentalists granted monument status Tuesday to three vast and breathtaking areas teeming with marine life in the South and Western Pacific. Combined with other designations over the past eight years, including the creation of a 138,000-square-mile marine national monument in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands two years ago, Mr. Bush has now protected more ocean habitat (333,000 square miles) than any of his predecessors.

Mr. Bush is using the American Antiquities Act to protect more than 195,000 square miles of marine habitat. This 1906 law gives the president the power to designate as national monuments any landmarks and other structures with historic or scientific value. Because Mr. Bush chose this route, as he did two years ago with the Hawaii designation, his action takes effect immediately, without a lengthy bureaucratic review under the federal marine sanctuaries law.

The Mariana Trench Marine National Monument includes 21 active underwater volcanoes, geothermal vents and the Mariana Trench. James L. Connaughton, chairman of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, noted during a media call this week that the trench is five times longer than the Grand Canyon and deeper, at its deepest point, than Mount Everest is tall. The Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument encompasses five widely dispersed reefs, atolls and islands that are home to seabirds, migratory birds, turtles and an abundance of predatory fish, such as sharks. And, according to Mr. Connaughton, the Rose Atoll Marine National Monument in American Samoa boasts "some of the broadest extent of live coral cover on the Earth."

The ecosystems and geological formations that will now be protected from exploitation or disturbance will preserve the environment and some species that are disappearing in other parts of the world. Equally important, the national monuments will provide a platform for scientific discovery, particularly as the impact of climate change on the oceans becomes more apparent. "These locations are truly among the last pristine environments on Earth," Mr. Connaughton said. And thanks to Mr. Bush's action this week, they will remain that way.

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Increasing profits

By RIK and JANEL VILLEGAS
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Rik is a business instructor at NMC and Janel is a partner with BizResults, LLC (www.bizresults.org). They can be contacted at biz_results@yahoo.com.

Every business would like to increase profits, especially in today's volatile economy, and it doesn't take a major breakthrough to see a significant difference on your bottom line. In fact, minor changes in key areas can spell the difference between surviving and thriving.

The diagram shows in the first column the numbers in a business that has, on average, 2,000 prospects visits in a month. This is about 66 visitors per day. Fifty percent of those visitors end up buying something and the other half walk out the door empty handed.

The average purchase amount is $100, and the customer returns about four times in a period of time (month or year). This yields sales of $400,000. In this example, the business would subtract its variable costs (VC), which is at 50 percent, and its fixed costs (FC) amount of $160,000, so the net income before taxes would be $40,000.

An easy way to increase profit is to cut expenses, and since salaries are one of the largest expenses in a business, owners often realize an instant boost in profits by laying off some of their people. This is why you read about major corporations that have massive layoffs so they can stabilize their bottom line. In the example, if you were to cut variable costs to 40 percent, instead of 50 percent, or cut your fixed costs from $160,000 to $80,000, or a combination of both, the business would instantly double it profits.

	Base	Improvement	% Change
Prospects who visit	2,000	2,000	0%
x 50% Conversion Ratio	1,000	1,100	+5%
= Ave. $ Purchase	$100	$105	+5%
x Return Purchases	4	4.2	+5%
= Sales	$400,000	$485,100	21.3% Increase
- Expenses (50% VC & $160K FC)	$360,000	$402,550	
= Profit	$40,000	$82,550	106.4% Increase

However, cutting costs also has hit repercussions and losing people or minimizing your inventory can affect the value customers enjoy from your business. Another way to increase profits is to boost your sales, so let's focus on how to increase sales incrementally in specific areas. In the second column, under "improvement," the number of prospects that visit stay the same; however, instead of a 50 percent conversion ratio, it improves by 5 percent to 55 percent. This would bring in 100 new buying customers for the month.

A 5 percent improvement of the average amount purchased would make the cash register ring with $5 extra dollars on each transaction, and only coming in .2 times, on average, would give a 21 percent improvement in sales. The fixed costs remain the same, but the variable costs would kick the overall expenses up an additional $42,000. However, the business would more than double its profits.

If the business is experiencing tough times, as many businesses in the CNMI are right now, and instead of having a 5 percent improvement, there is a 5 percent decrease in each area, it would have a negative impact on the business. Instead of a 50 percent conversion ration, it would be 45 percent, and instead of an average $100 purchase, it is $95. The last factor to consider is your expenses, which would be less; yet, the net income prior to taxes would be almost nothing—only $2,450. You can see that with only a 5 percent change in three key areas, your business could experience a significant improvement or a devastating blow to the bottom line.

The principles that work in business also apply to personal and home money management. As the cost of living has increased, your discretionary dollars have become thinner and you've noticed the money pinch that comes after you've spent your paycheck on bills. You can change your personal financial situation by finding ways to bring in more money or ways to reduce your expenses. Like businesses, most people find it easier to cur their costs, but working to improve both areas is often the best thing to do.

One other area that could make a huge difference in a business is the ability to bring in more prospects. Typically, businesses will spend hundreds or thousands of dollars each month to get more people to visit and buy something through advertising and other promotional methods. Using the same example in the second column, you'll remember that about 66 prospects visit the business per day and only 55 percent of them purchase something. If only five more prospects visited the business per day (71 times 30.33 average days per month), and nothing else changed in the second column, the results on the bottom line would be $101,157, or *an increase of 152.9 percent!*

These are amazing figures that can come from strategic improvements in key areas of your business. These figures will vary with your business based on your actual numbers, but the main point of this example is that it doesn't take dramatic improvements or changes to realize a huge difference on your bottom line.

EDITORIAL POLICY The *Saipan Tribune* welcomes comments on any article, column, editorial, or topic that may be of interest to the public. Letters to the editor must include the name, address, and contact number of the contributor. Letters that are critical in nature should focus on issues, not personalities. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, Century Insurance Building, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

A great day for Earth

This is a great day for the planet. On Tuesday, Jan. 6, President George W. Bush cemented his legacy forever as the "Ocean President" by declaring three areas to be designated as marine monuments: The Marianas Trench Marine National Monument, the Rose Atoll Marine National Monument, and the Pacific Remote Islands National Monument.

I would like to thank the following environmental superheroes for making the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument a reality: The Friends of the Monument; the 6,000 concerned citizens of the CNMI who signed the petition in support of the marine monument; the 206 businesses that supported the monument; the 50 letters to President Bush; the Governor, Speaker, and Senate President of the CNMI for working with Connaughton of the CEQ to hammer out the details of the monument; the Chamber of Commerce, HANMI, and Tan Holdings for their support; and the Hopwood High School and NMC students who debated, wrote letters, studied the issues and made presentations on the proposed marine monument in their classes.

Here is what we get, direct from the language of the declaration:

1. Management of the Islands Unit of the monument, in consultation with the Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, including designation of specific roles and responsibilities and the means of consultation on management decisions as appropriate, without affecting the respective authorities or jurisdictions of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands or the Secretaries of the Interior or of Commerce;

2. Public education programs and public outreach regarding the coral reef ecosystem and related marine resources and species of the monument and efforts to conserve them;

3. Traditional access by indigenous persons, as identified by the Secretaries in consultation with the Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, for culturally significant subsistence, cultural and religious uses within the monument;

4. A program to assess and promote monument-related scientific exploration and research, tourism, and recreational and economic activities and opportunities in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands;

5. A process to consider requests for recreational fishing permits in certain areas of the Islands Unit, based on an analysis of the likely effects of such fishing on the marine ecosystems of these areas, sound professional judgment that such fishing will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the purposes of this proclamation, and the extent to which such recreational fishing shall be managed as a sustainable activity consistent with Executive Order 12962, as amended, and other applicable law; and

6. Programs for monitoring and enforcement necessary to ensure that scientific exploration and research, tourism, and recreational and commercial activities do not degrade the monument's coral reef ecosystem or related marine resources or species or diminish the monument's natural character.

For the President's speech and the complete text of the declaration, go to Angelo Villagomez's blog: http://jetapplicant.blogspot.com/2009/01/george-w-bush-on-marianas-archipelago.html

This multiple marine monument declaration is a win for the planet and its marine life, and for the people of the world and the CNMI. Moreover, we will get a visitors center, a boat, a plane, jobs, an economic boost, research, educational opportunities, and positive global recognition. How can you beat that to start off the new year in a great way?

Ken Kramer
Gualo Rai, Saipan

Thank you!

I want to spread around some gratitude, now that President Bush has designated parts of our ocean as a national marine monument. Thanks to Pew Charitable Trusts and its Ocean Legacy Project for introducing us to the idea of a national marine monument in our waters.

Thanks to everyone who supported the idea of a monument here in the CNMI from the beginning, including Jacinta Kaipat and Angelo Villagomez. Thanks to all of my fellow Friends of the Monument, including Ike Cabrera, Ken Kramer, Agnes McPhetres, Andrew Salas, Ruth Tighe and Chailang Palacios and the hundreds of others who contributed their talents to the project. Thanks to all those who wrote letters to the newspapers and to the White House to urge designation of a monument here. Thanks to the 6,000 people who signed our petitions in support. Thanks to the business community, and especially the Chamber of Commerce, for supporting the monument proposal.

Thanks to those who helped our community gain a better understanding of the proposal, especially William Aila of Hawaii. Thanks to the state of Hawaii, for having the first national marine monument and showing us what a successful marine monument looks like. Thanks to the CNMI students who debated about the proposal, and to their teacher, and those who watched and listened. Thanks to those who offered public venues for discussion and presentations, to those who came to the meetings and presentations, and to those who stopped by the Friends of the Monument office.

Thanks to those who eventually came to support the monument proposition after initially questioning it or opposing it. In this camp, most notable is Governor Fitial and our legislative leadership. Although their support has not been widely reported, President Bush would not have gone forward without it, and Governor Fitial's presence at the announcement was a strong signal that our community has reached a consensus of sorts.

Thanks to James Connaughton, Lyle Laverty, and the other federal officials who made the trip to the CNMI to discuss the work-in-progress proposal, who listened and made adjustments in the proposal to satisfy concerns of government leaders. Thanks to Mrs. Laura Bush for her influence and support. Thanks to President George W. Bush for the willingness to care and for using his capacity to make a difference.

I would even say thanks to those, like John Gourley, who opposed the monument, some with scare tactics and misinformation. This forced those supporting the monument to be more careful in expressing what exactly was on the table, to dig deeper into the mounds of information available about our dwindling marine resources and the need to protect them, and to work together.

Last, but not least, thanks to the media—the newspapers, television, and Internet—where stories, photos, opinions, and information about the monument proposal and the effort to have a national marine monument designated here have been made available to the public, in the CNMI, in Guam, Hawaii, the United States, Australia, and the world.

Jane Mack
San Vicente, Saipan

A crowded gubernatorial race

Political pundits have begun showcasing their selection of gubernatorial trade horses. So far there are eight known prospects, including the incumbent governor. It becomes an interesting group as the electorate begins quizzing what would candidates bring to the table to improve their economic lot. We shall see, shortly.

■ ■ ■

The future of the local economy will remain an anchorless boat drifting heedlessly in the open waters. It will drift and drift in this fashion for as long as we yawn and fail to grab the beast and define it. It's a difficult task but one that we can no longer ignore. Perhaps the "address" syndrome has derailed us from any meaningful effort to morph into the "resolve" level. *A` saina!*

■ ■ ■

People have raised the issue of indigenous land ownership for all the wrong reasons. My answer is brief: I support the rights of our people to own 100 percent of their land. Let's do away with the current arrangement where the state government has veto power over our land. If something is, then it can't be isn't on a simultaneous basis. Shall we employ common sense in sober fashion when we engage in deliberative discussion on indigenous landownership?

■ ■ ■

These isles have become a multi-cultural community. It stands to reason, therefore, that our relationship with one another (no matter your ethnic origin) must remain *seamless*. After all, no matter how you splice, slice or dice it, we are all descendants of Adam and Eve. Call it maturity that must be allowed to blossom into one joyful magnanimity!

■ ■ ■

Over lunch last Christmas, my wife uttered that she misses the smell of a brand new car. She quizzed if we could replace good old faithful. I replied quickly in the affirmative but purposely skipped completing the sentence. Came the dreadful query: "So when would that be?" I shot right back: After 2011. She pressed why so long. I said, "Our son graduates in May of that year and we would be free from supporting him!" The discussion ended.

■ ■ ■

Bernard Madoff has been arrested for creating a giant pyramid of deceit against well-meaning investors. Gee! I didn't know Wall Street could become Deceitful Street of the highest order. If he's found guilty, then the sucker and others similarly situated must be thrown into the slammer for a lifetime vacation.

■ ■ ■

Just for kicks, I placed my name in the Google box and clicked it for fun. There came a brief history of the name DelRosario. A person named Juan DelRosario came to the New World in 1513. The name has a coat of arms, too. As I discussed this piece of history with friends, I had to boast that for the longest time I've been one dark brown haole. (Laughter). *Hombre este I taotaota, ni hafa un sañgan i chatpagomu ha` finenina mana`yan hao. Di does ihu!*

■ ■ ■

Mampos i taotaota man-butlon ya megai besis na manlotgun gi fino English/Chamorro: bandan "negative". Atan ha` i naan` `nos kuantos taotaota: Tun Joaquin Flauta, Tan Josepan Paluma, Nan Chai Manog, Tan Elisan Chacha, Juan Alitus, yan otro siha naan ni finañagon botlu. Debi ta suetta este na mañata sa ti homlu`.

■ ■ ■

My hectic day was receding until a grandchild sent me the following text message on the celery phone: "Grandpa, I'm textually active!" Somehow, I misread the word "textually" and thought it was "sexually" active. My apologies! Call it getting old, yeah? *Si Yuus Maase`! Si* Iku.

John S. DelRosario Jr.
As Gonno, Saipan

Forgiveness is key

On the issue between Mr. Vic Cepeda of Kristo Rai and Mr. Noli Santos, a choir group of the same church, it is a sad plight between them but I am not taking any sides as I do not know what really happened. But this is not a good example of being a Christian.

This reminds me of what happened in 1Corinthians of the New Testament. The apostle Paul was having a terrible headache because of the attitude of the Christians. The church founded by Paul was one of the largest during the 1st century but had broken out in a series of spiritual ills because of jealousy and selfishness among themselves. And this immaturity has been carried to this very day, which proves our spiritual life has never matured and we never learned.

On the other hand, boycotting or asking support of other churchgoers not to attend Mass at Kristo Rai until Mr. Cepeda makes a public apology is not a good option as it only creates division among Christians.

As a believer and a follower of Jesus Christ, one of the practical step we should take in order to be truly one: We should humbly seek the forgiveness of any brother we have hurt and be loving enough to forgive those who hurt us. Do this and you will find happiness, freedom and love.

Rino Obar
Saipan Bible Fellowship
via e-mail

Cry for help

To: The Attorney General Criminal Division

My family and I are victims of grand theft. This incident happened sometime in June 2008. It has been a long time already and whoever is the attorney in charge of our case, we are asking for your help. We are in desperate need of justice and your assistance. Not only us but there are many more people here on Tinian in need of your help. Our case number is 08-00-204. I've never heard of any theft case on Tinian that has ever been solved at all. Maybe there are a few that have been solved but probably it was solved when I wasn't born yet. If these criminals do not go to jail or get punished for their acts of crime, then this dilemma will go on and on. They will constantly repeat their criminal behavior because they can get away with it. They think they are above the law but I'm here to prove them wrong. I am the voice of the unspoken. I am the voice for those who are afraid to speak and stand up for what they believe in. I speak on behalf of all those need of justice and I say that we are in great need of your help.

David San Nicolas Jr.
San Jose, Tinian

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam Homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

The Weather

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Mostly sunny with a slight chance of showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with a slight chance of showers.	Partly cloudy with a slight chance of showers.	Partly cloudy with a slight chance of showers.
▲87° ▼77°	▲87° ▼77°	▲87° ▼75°	▲87° ▼76°	▲87° ▼76°

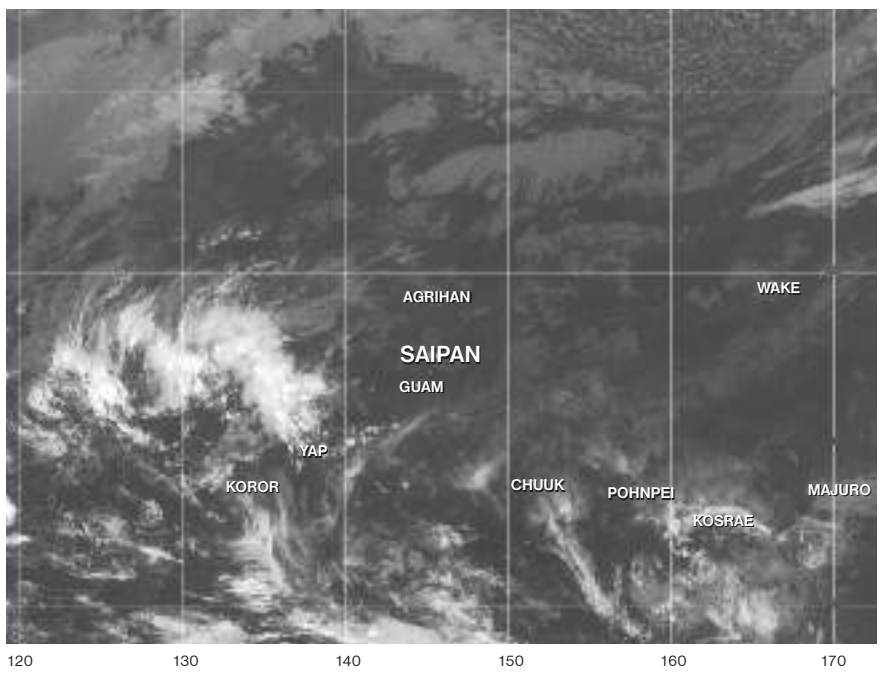
Micronesia

Guam and Rota	Showers	▲84	▼75
Palau	Cloudy	▲87	▼76
Yap	Showers	▲87	▼76
Chuuk	Mostly Sunny	▲90	▼80
Pohnpei	Partly Sunny	▲86	▼78
Kosrae	Partly Sunny	▲87	▼77
Majuro	Showers	▲85	▼77

Around The Globe

Auckland	Sunny	▲76	▼64
Beijing	Partly Sunny	▲28	▼10
Hong Kong	Mostly Sunny	▲68	▼50
Honolulu	Mostly Sunny	▲79	▼69
London	Cloudy	▲39	▼27
Los Angeles	Mostly Sunny	▲66	▼48
Manila	Showers	▲87	▼73
Melbourne	Partly Sunny	▲66	▼48
Miami	Mostly Sunny	▲74	▼55
New York	Mostly Cloudy	▲37	▼24
Osaka	Partly Sunny	▲51	▼34
Paris	Sunny	▲31	▼23
Pusan	Partly Sunny	▲47	▼25
Rome	Mostly Sunny	▲54	▼38
Salem	Rain	▲48	▼35
San Francisco	Showers	▲53	▼46
Seoul	Mostly Sunny	▲30	▼10
Tokyo	Mostly Cloudy	▲43	▼37
Washington, DC	Mostly Cloudy	▲45	▼28

Yesterday's Satellite Image



PICTURE TIME: 1:00PM, WEDNESDAY, JAN. 7, 2009
Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A near-equatorial trough stretches from 5N130E to EQ140E. Little precipitation is directly associated with the trough. Low-level convergence north of the trough is generating scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms between 10N and 20N from 130E to 140E. A surface trough extends northeastward from EQ168E to 7N172E. Low-level convergence ahead of the trough is producing scattered showers between the equator and 3N from 160E to 170E. Low-level convergence near and behind the trough is generating scattered showers across portions of the Marshall Islands between 4N and 8N from 169E to 180. The remnants of the shear line stretches from near 20N180 to 11N160E to 11N150E. Cloudiness and scattered showers can be found along and up to 200 miles north of the boundary.

Tides

Saipan Harbor		
6:15AM Today	High Tide:	1.7 Feet
10:45AM Today	Low Tide:	1.4 Feet
3:56PM Today	High Tide:	2.0 Feet
11:45PM Today	Low Tide:	0.6 Feet

Sunrise/Sunset

Today	6:45AM	6:02 PM
Friday	6:46AM	6:03 PM
Saturday	6:46AM	6:03 PM
Sunday	6:46AM	6:04 PM
Monday	6:46AM	6:04 PM

Moonrise/Moonset

Today	2:51PM	3:20 AM
Friday	3:55PM	4:27AM
Saturday	5:04PM	5:34AM
Sunday	6:13PM	6:36AM
Monday	7:18PM	7:33AM

GET YOUR PICTURES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS PUBLISHED—FOR FREE

The *Saipan Tribune* accepts for FREE publication the following:

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- ISLAND SNAPSHOTS
  Birthdays, baptisms, christenings, family gatherings, reunions, club activities, and other community-related events.
- BIRTHDAY GREETINGS
  A way for families and friends to greet their loved ones, accompanied by a picture of the person celebrating his/her birthday.
- BUSINESS
  Corporate donations, volunteer work, promotions, granting of awards, team-building exercises, meetings and other activities by members of the business community.
- SAMU'T SARI
  Pictures from the islands' Filipino community, primarily focusing on Filipino activities, gatherings, get-togethers, volunteer work, etc.
- TRAVELOGUE
  Pictures of off-island travels. Contributors may submit up to 10 pictures for consideration.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- COMMUNITY BRIEFS
  Announcements of upcoming activities of organizations, community clubs, government agencies, and private companies.
- CAMPUS BULLETIN
  Announcements of upcoming activities in public and private schools, as well as calendar of activities. May include PTSA meetings, enrollment procedures.

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For pictures:

- Photos should be original and not copyrighted. Contributors must have the right to allow the *Saipan Tribune* to publish the pictures.
- Digital pictures should be high-resolution (minimum of 800kb).
- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and phone number.
- Photos must have been taken in the last two months.
- For birthday greetings, must be submitted no later than 12 noon of the previous day to make it to next day's edition.

For announcements:

- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and a phone number.
- Must be submitted no later than 12 noon to make it to next day's edition.

HOW TO SUBMIT

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- Fax: (670) 235-3740
- Mail: PMB 34, P.O. Box 10001, Saipan, CNMI 96950
- Drop off: 2nd Floor, CIC Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan
  To check if contributions are received, call (670) 235-6397, 235-2440, 235-8747

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- The *Saipan Tribune* will decide how often community announcements are going to be published.
- For Travelogue, the *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to choose which pictures to publish.

NMI CRIME STOPPERS

Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:

- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any PTI cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.com

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ADVERTISING For inquiries contact (670) 235-2769. E-mail: sales@saipantribune.com

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 1, 2009

DEPARTURES

Saipan-Rota			
CO9597	11:50am	12:25pm	1,7
Saipan-Guam			
CO9317	5:00am	5:50am	Daily
CO9313	8:30am	9:20am	Daily
CO9597	11:50am	1:20pm	1,7 via Rota
CO9601	12:30pm	1:20pm	2,3,4,5,6
CO9603	3:30pm	4:20pm	Daily
CO9605	6:30pm	7:20pm	Daily
CO9599	9:30pm	10:20pm	Daily
Saipan-Narita			
NW 099	5:00am	7:35am	Daily
NW 078	8:20am	1:30pm	2,3,4,5,6,7
NW 075	4:55pm	7:30pm	Daily
Guam-Narita			
NW 73	4:10pm	7:00pm	Daily
NW 81	3:55pm	6:55pm	Daily
Saipan-Osaka			
OZ 119	4:00am	6:40am	1,4,6
NW 083	4:30pm	7:20pm	Daily
Guam-Osaka			
NW 79	4:45pm	7:35pm	Daily
Saipan-Nagoya			
NW 078	8:20am	11:05am	Daily
Guam-Nagoya			
NW 23	4:30pm	7:20pm	Daily
Saipan-Incheon			
OZ 604	2:10am	6:00am	1
OZ 604	2:40am	6:30am	2,3,4,5,6,7
OZ 119	4:00am	11:25am	1,4,6 via Osaka
OZ 606	3:20pm	7:00pm	Daily
Saipan-Busan			
OZ 608	3:20am	6:50am	1,4,5,7
Saipan-Shanghai			
FM 844	2:50am	5:40am	2,6
Rota-Guam			
CO 9597	12:50pm	1:20pm	1,7
Guam-Palau			
CO 953	7:40pm	8:40pm	1,7
CO 893	5:50pm	6:50pm	3,5
Palau-Manila			
CO 893	7:35pm	9:10pm	3,5
Guam-Manila			
CO 893	5:50pm	9:10pm	3,5 via Koror
CO 933	8:00pm	9:40pm	Daily
PR 111	6:00am	7:50am	1,2,4,6,7
Nagoya-Manila			
NW 71	8:40pm	11:55pm	Daily
Incheon-Hongkong			
OZ 721	9:20am	12:00pm	Daily
OZ 723	7:45pm	10:35pm	Daily
OZ 7173	8:00pm	10:50pm	5,7
Narita-Manila			
NW 1	7:00pm	10:55pm	Daily

ARRIVALS

Rota-Saipan			
CO 9598	3:25am	4:00am	5,6
Guam-Saipan			
CO 9316	2:30am	3:20am	1,2,3,4,7
CO9598	2:30am	4:00am	5,6 via Rota
CO9596	7:00am	7:50am	Daily
CO9600	10:20am	11:10am	Daily
CO9602	2:00pm	2:50pm	Daily
CO9604	5:00pm	5:50pm	Daily
CO9606	8:00pm	8:50pm	Daily
Narita-Saipan			
NW 076	10:15am	2:40pm	Daily
NW 077	6:25pm	1:20am+1	2,3,4,5,6,7
NW 100	8:45pm	1:10am+1	Daily
Narita-Guam			
NW 74	9:45am	2:20pm	Daily
NW 82	10:30am	3:10pm	Daily
Osaka-Saipan			
OZ 120	9:50pm	2:20am+1	3,5,7
NW 084	10:40am	3:05pm	Daily
Osaka-Guam			
NW 80	10:30am	3:00pm	Daily
Nagoya-Saipan			
NW 077	9:00pm	1:20am+1	Daily
Nagoya-Guam			
NW 24	10:00am	2:30pm	Daily
Incheon-Saipan			
OZ 605	9:00am	2:20pm	Daily
OZ 603	7:40pm	1:00am+1	7
OZ 120	7:10pm	2:20am+1	3,5,7 via Osaka
OZ 603	8:10pm	1:30am+1	1,2,3,4,5,6
Busan-Saipan			
OZ 607	9:00pm	2:10am+1	3,4,6,7
Shanghai-Saipan			
FM 843	7:15pm	1:50am+1	1,5
Guam-Rota			
CO 9598	2:30am	3:00am	5,6
Palau-Guam			
CO 954	2:30am	5:25am	1,2
CO 892	2:35am	5:30am	4,6
Manila-Palau			
CO 892	10:10pm	1:50am+1	3,5
Manila-Guam			
CO 892	10:10pm	5:30am+1	3,5 via Koror
CO 934	11:10pm	4:40am+1	Daily
PR 110	10:10pm	4:00am+1	1,3,5,6,7
Manila-Nagoya			
NW 72	6:30am	11:05am	Daily
Hongkong-Incheon			
OZ 724	12:30am	4:50am	Daily
OZ 7183	12:45am	5:05am	1,4,6
OZ 722	1:30pm	5:45pm	Daily
Manila-Narita			
NW 2	7:45am	12:40pm	Daily

Editor's Note: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); CO: Continental; FM: Shanghai Airlines; PR: Philippine Airlines; NW: Northwest; OZ: Asiana
ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

FREEDOM AIR FLIGHT SCHEDULE

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
Guam-Rota			
FRE 100	7:00am	7:30am	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 100	7:50am	8:20am	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 200	9:00am	9:30am	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 200	9:50am	10:15am	Daily
Guam-Rota			
FRE 300	4:00pm	4:30pm	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 300	4:50pm	5:25pm	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 400	6:00pm	6:30pm	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 400	6:45pm	7:15pm	Daily
Saipan-Tinian			
FRE 101	6:45am	6:55am	Daily
FRE 103	7:30am	7:40am	Daily
FRE 105	8:00am	8:10am	Daily
FRE 107	8:40am	8:50am	Daily
FRE 109*	9:10am	9:20am	Daily
FRE 111*	10:45am	10:55am	Daily

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
FRE 113	11:40am	11:50am	Daily
FRE 115	1:00pm	1:10pm	Daily
FRE 117	2:30pm	2:40pm	Daily
FRE 119	4:00pm	4:10pm	Daily
FRE 121	4:40pm	4:50pm	Daily
FRE 123 *	5:40pm	5:50pm	Daily
FRE 125 *	6:00pm	6:10pm	Daily
Tinian-Saipan w/ connecting flights to Rota or Guam**			
FRE 102	7:05am	7:15am	Daily
FRE 104	7:50am	8:00am	Daily
FRE 106**	8:20am	8:30am	Daily
FRE 108**	9:00am	9:10am	Daily
FRE 110	10:00am	10:10am	Daily
FRE 112	11:05am	11:15am	Daily
FRE 114	12:00pm	12:10pm	Daily
FRE 116	1:30pm	1:40pm	Daily
FRE 118	2:50pm	3:00pm	Daily
FRE 120**	4:20pm	4:30pm	Daily
FRE 122**	5:00pm	5:10pm	Daily
FRE 124	6:05pm	6:15pm	Daily
FRE 126	6:20pm	6:30pm	Daily

Business

STOCK Portfolio

ASIAN MARKETS

AUSTRALIA
3,728.200
Up 39.000
(1.06%)

HONG KONG
15,128.33
Down 381.18
(-2.46%)

JAKARTA
1,445.537
Up 10.00
(0.70%)

TOKYO
9,239.24
Up 158.40
(1.74%)

K. LUMPUR
926.49
Up 4.26
(0.46%)

MANILA
2,003.89
Up 34.31
(1.74%)

SINGAPORE
1,900.10
Down 13.56
(-0.71%)

SEOUL
1,228.17
Up 33.89
(2.84%)

BANGKOK
477.67
Up 4.52
(0.96%)

LEADING INDICATORS

DOW
9,015.10
62.21

NASDAQ
1,652.38
24.35

S&P
934.70
0.00

MONEY MARKET

Australian Dollar	1.3849
British Pound	0.6706
Canadian Dollar	1.1841
Chinese Renminbi	6.8335
Euro	0.7395
Hong Kong Dollar	7.7534
Indian Rupee	48.5900
Indonesian Rupiah	10,775.0000
Japanese Yen	93.7150
Malaysian Ringgit	3.4955
New Zealand Dollar	1.6793
Philippine Peso	46.4720
Singapore Dollar	1.4725
South Korean Won	1,294.5000
Swiss Franc	1.1134
Taiwan Dollar	32.9530
Thailand Baht	34.9050

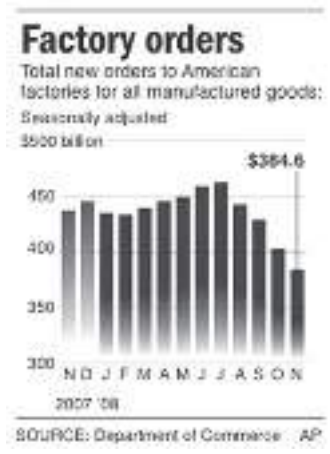
In U.S. dollar terms

Source: Associated Press

Economy in grip of recession, reports show

WASHINGTON (AP)—Anyone looking for a bright spot in the recession might have pointed to a reading Tuesday of the nation's office workers, retailers and other service industries, which contracted at a slower-than-expected pace in December.

But even the closely watched gauge of activity in the service sector, where most Americans work, showed it was still shrinking. And coupled with two bleaker economic reports, it suggested to analysts that the struggling economy is likely to shed many more jobs in the months ahead.



The Institute for Supply Management, a trade group of purchasing executives, said its service sectors index posted a small increase to 40.6 in December from 37.3 in November. Economists had been looking for the index to slip further in December. Any reading below 50 signals economic contraction.

Despite the better-than-expected reading, analysts said the overall index—and its major components, such as employment prospects—remained at recessionary levels.

Ian Shepherdson, chief U.S. economist at High Frequency Economics, a private research firm in Valhalla, N.Y., said the reading on the employment component of the index was consistent with "massive job losses" of around 350,000 per month.

"This is not an indicator of recovery," Shepherdson said.

Other reports Tuesday on factory orders and pending home sales showed the economy's troubles have intensified since the worst financial crisis in seven decades erupted with fury in the fall.

Wall Street advanced moderately Tuesday, paring some earlier gains following the mixed economic readings but stocks still finished at their highest levels in two months. The Dow Jones industrial average gained more than 62 points to 9,015.10, and broader indexes also rose.

Still, economists are predicting that December's unemployment report, which will be released Friday, will show the total economy lost a half-million jobs last month after a loss of 533,000 in November.

After sales, will shoppers pay full price again?

NEW YORK (AP)—Shoppers are getting used to those 75 percent off sale signs, and that's bad news for merchants who worry they will also have to quickly slash prices on spring goods to attract customers.

Anxieties about how rampant discounts have affected shoppers' psyches and stores' profits are running high ahead of expected dismal December sales figures on Thursday. The holiday season is anticipated to be the worst in decades.

Already, retailers including Bebe Stores Inc. and J.Crew Group Inc. are cutting prices on selected spring styles to lure sale-savvy shoppers.

"It is a vicious cycle that no one wants to continue," said Gilbert Harrison, chairman of Financo Inc., an investment banking firm specializing in retailing. The discounts will be a key topic at Financo's annual dinner on Monday for retail chief executives.

In addition, retailers expect competition from a rise in liquidation sales—the fallout from the horrible holiday period.

Merchants struggling to clear out mounds of deeply discounted coats and sweaters are wondering how they are going to get nervous shoppers to splurge on new spring products.

The deep price cuts are making shoppers question the true value of items. If they can get $200 jeans at 60 percent off, will they be willing to pay the original price next fall?

"Our sense of what is fair and what is a good deal has changed," said Michal Ann Strahilevitz, professor of marketing at the Golden Gate University's Ageno School of Business. She said that a sale has to be at least 70 percent off to be considered a bargain now.

AP

Shoppers on New York's Madison Ave. pass a DKNY clothing store promoting a sale of up to 90 percent off, Monday, Jan. 5, 2009.

Financial crisis takes human toll

BERLIN (AP)—His spirit broken by financial fears, German billionaire Adolf Merckle took his own life this week—becoming the latest high-profile casualty of a global economic crisis that already has claimed the lives of executives in Europe and the U.S.

Merckle

Merckle, a respected businessmen with a wife and four children, jumped in front of a train in the town of Blaubeuren in southwestern Germany, officials said Tuesday.

His business empire had run into trouble in the crisis, and its problems were compounded by heavy losses in trading of shares in automaker Volkswagen AG. Merckle's business interests included generic drug maker Ratiopharm International GmbH and cement maker HeidelbergCement AG.

Merckle's family said in a statement that "the distress to his firms caused by the financial crisis and the related uncertainties of recent weeks, along with the helplessness of no longer being able to act, broke the passionate family businessman."

Authorities said he left a suicide note, but gave no details. Merckle's death appears to be at least the third comparable suicide in less than four months.

Skilling convictions upheld; will get resentenced

HOUSTON (AP)—A federal appeals court Tuesday upheld former Enron Corp. CEO Jeff Skilling's convictions for his role in the energy giant's collapse but threw out his 24-year prison term and ordered that he be resentenced.

A three-judge panel of the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans denied Skilling's request to overturn his convictions. Skilling argued his convictions were invalid because of what his lawyers argued were incorrect legal theory, faulty jury instructions, a biased jury and prosecutorial misconduct, including accusations of witness intimidation and withholding evidence.

The panel wrote in its opinion that Skilling "failed to demonstrate that the government's case rested on an incorrect theory of law or that any reversible errors infected his trial."

While denying those arguments, the appellate panel also found that U.S. District Judge Sim Lake improperly applied a sentencing guideline that resulted in a longer prison term for Skilling, and ordered that he be resentenced. But legal experts still expect Skilling to get a lengthy prison term whenever he is resentenced.

Skilling was convicted in May 2006 on 19 counts of fraud, conspiracy, insider trading and lying to auditors for his role in the collapse of Houston-based Enron, once the nation's seventh-largest company.

Skilling is the highest-ranking executive to be punished for the accounting tricks and shady business deals that led to the loss of thousands of jobs, more than $60 billion in Enron stock value and more than $2 billion in employee pension plans after the company imploded in 2001.

Company founder Kenneth Lay also was convicted of conspiracy, fraud and other charges, but his convictions were vacated after he died less than two months later of heart disease.

Skilling's attorney, Daniel Petrocelli, said he was "extremely disappointed." Petrocelli said he planned to ask for a rehearing before the three-judge panel, or before the entire 5th Circuit court, or he'll appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

LyondellBasell units file for bankruptcy

DALLAS (AP)—The U.S. arm of chemical giant LyondellBasell Industries has filed for bankruptcy as the recession continues to weaken demand for its products, which are used in everything from cars to detergents. The Houston-based company said Tuesday that it had arranged for up to $8 billion in financing to keep operating while it reorganizes. Lyondell Chemical Co. and related affiliates listed assets of $27.1 billion and liabilities of $19.3 billion. It identified 79 affiliates that will file for bankruptcy protection, including one of LyondellBasell's European holding companies. The company identified its largest unsecured creditor as the Bank of New York, which is trustee for $615 million in notes and another $241.4 million in notes at an affiliate.

Alcoa to cut 13 pct of global work force

PITTSBURGH (AP)—Alcoa Inc., the world's third-largest aluminum maker, said Tuesday it will cut 13,500 jobs, or 13 percent of its work force, and slash spending and output to cope with the global economic slowdown. The reductions expand on cost-cutting measures announced in October, when Alcoa reported a 52-percent decline in third-quarter profit due to sharply lower aluminum prices, weaker demand and a charge from curtailing a smelter in Texas. In its latest announcement, which came after U.S. markets closed Tuesday, the Pittsburgh-based company said it also will cut 1,700 contractor positions and sell four business units. It has imposed a global salary and hiring freeze.

Apple cuts copy protection and prices on iTunes

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)—Apple Inc. is cutting the price of some songs in its market-leading iTunes online store to as little as 69 cents and plans to make every track available without copy protection. In Apple's final appearance at the Macworld trade show, Apple's top marketing executive, Philip Schiller, said Tuesday that iTunes song prices will come in three tiers: 69 cents, 99 cents and $1.29. Record companies will choose the prices, which marks a significant change, since Apple previously made all songs sell for 99 cents. Apple gave the record labels that flexibility on pricing as it got them to agree to sell all songs free of "digital rights management," or DRM, technology that limits people's ability to copy songs or move them to multiple computers. Apple had been offering a limited selection of songs without DRM, but by the end of this quarter, the company said, all 10 million songs in its library will be available that way.

Nation

ACROSS THE NATION

LA water cops hunt wasteful faucets, sprinklers

LOS ANGELES (AP)—The green thumbs who keep lawns lush and flora flourishing in the city have found a new foe among the aphids, white flies and other yard pests—the water police. Just as some scofflaws keep an eye out for black-and-white patrol cars, gardeners have learned to spot the white Toyota Priuses driven by Los Angeles water cops out to fight waste as California struggles with an extended drought. "They get to scattering when they see us," said Department of Water and Power officer Alonzo Ballengar. "I don't know what they call me, but I'm sure they have names." A total of 15 officers now prowl neighborhoods and respond to thousands of tips in their search for those who use sprinklers between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m., clean driveways with water instead of a broom or otherwise waste the precious commodity. Officials estimate that landscaping accounts for as much as 70 percent of household water bills.

Prosecutor: Ex-Calif. sheriff cheated to get job

SANTA ANA, Calif. (AP)—A former Orange County sheriff gave power and influence to those who helped him win his first election through bribes and kickbacks laundered as campaign contributions, a federal prosecutor said Tuesday in closing arguments. "In 1998, the citizens of Orange County put their faith and trust in Mike Carona to be their sheriff and what they didn't know when they did was that Mike Carona cheated to win the election," Assistant U.S. Attorney Ken Julian told jurors at the former sheriff's corruption trial. The prosecutor played nearly a dozen excerpts of secretly recorded conversations between Carona and his former assistant sheriff, Don Haidl, who was a star witness for the prosecution at the two-month trial. Between snippets in which Carona talked about payments being "untraceable," Julian reminded the jury that Haidl testified he helped Carona launder at least $30,000 in campaign contributions in return for the post of assistant sheriff. "All those men ... who were captains and lieutenants and made years of sacrifices to get a command position, and Don Haidl just walks in without any of the sacrifices—just for money—and he's able to get three stars on his collar," Julian said.

Lou the mule credited with saving woman from fire

McMINNVILLE, Tenn. (AP)—Jolene Solomon is beginning the new year with her life, her mule named Lou and little else. The Southern Standard in McMinnville reported Solomon had just finished eating supper on New Year's Day when Lou's braying and acting up got her attention. Solomon, 63, who lived alone, stepped outside, she saw her house was on fire. She called 911 and as she waited for firefighters, her home and everything in it burned to the ground. She said her father bought Lou years ago to help her and her late sister, Blue, around the farm. It took Lou months to get over the loss of her sister. Solomon said she has 'lost it all', but credits Lou with saving her life. Jolene is staying with family members and plans to rebuild her home. The home was built by her grandfather and she had lived there all her life.

New Congress opens pledging to rescue economy

AP

Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., center, holds a Bible as he stands with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi of Calif., left, during the mock swearing-in ceremony for Rep. Patrick Kennedy, D-R.I., right, Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2009, on Capitol Hill in Washington.

WASHINGTON (AP)—The Capitol rang loud with vows to fix the crisis-ridden economy Tuesday as Congress opened for business at the dawn of a new Democratic era. "We need action and we need action now," said Speaker Nancy Pelosi. Republicans agreed, and pledged cooperation in Congress as well as with President-elect Barack Obama—to a point.

On a day largely devoted to ceremony, new members of Congress and those newly re-elected swore to defend the Constitution. The Senate galleries were crowded; children and grandchildren of lawmakers squirmed in their seats in the House chamber as the winners in last fall's elections claimed their prizes.

One office-seeker was not among them.

In a scripted bit of political theater, Democrat Roland Burris of Illinois was informed he would not be seated because his paperwork was not in order. He pledged a lawsuit, the latest twist in a political drama that began when he was named to Obama's Senate seat by Gov. Rod Blagojevich, who has been charged with having attempted to sell the appointment.

Obama was across town in a meeting with his economic advisers as the opening gavels fell in the House and Senate at noon. His inauguration as the nation's first black president is two weeks away.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, a veteran of numerous battles with President George W. Bush, made plain how glad he was the old administration was winding down.

"We are ready to answer the call of the American people by putting the past eight years behind us and delivering the change that our country desperately needs," he said on the Senate floor. We are grateful to begin anew with a far more robust Democratic majority."

At the same time, in comments directed at Republicans, he said, "we are in this together" when it comes to the economy, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, health care and the country's energy needs.

Sen. Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the Republican leader, replied in a speech of his own, saying, "The opportunities for cooperation are numerous." He said Democrats should avoid a "reckless rush to meet an arbitrary deadline" to pass an economic stimulus bill that could reach $1 trillion, and he outlined possible changes in the approach Obama and the Democratic congressional leaders have been considering.

Among them was a proposal to cut taxes by 10 percent. Another was to lend money to hard-pressed state governments rather than give it to them. "States will be far less likely to spend it frivolously" in that case, he said.

Democratic leaders seek to resolve Burris saga

WASHINGTON (AP)—Roland Burris failed to capture President-elect Barack Obama's old Senate seat Tuesday in a wild piece of political theater, but the Democrats' opposition cracked when a key chairwoman said seating him was simply the legal thing to do.

Democratic leaders, set to meet with Burris on Wednesday, were searching for a way to defuse the dispute before it further overshadows the 111th Congress. Knowledgeable Senate officials of both parties widely predicted that the saga would end with Burris being seated. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly.

Seating Burris seemed more likely late Tuesday, when Sen. Dianne Feinstein rejected the reasoning that all of the chamber's Democrats, herself included, had cited in a letter last week - that corruption charges against Burris' patron, Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich, tainted his appointment.

"Does the governor have the power, under law, to make the appointment? And the answer is yes," said Feinstein, chairwoman of the Senate Rules Committee, which judges the credentials of senators.

Burris marched into the Capitol earlier Tuesday, declaring himself "the junior senator from the state of Illinois." But Secretary of the Senate Nancy Erickson rejected his certification, as he knew she would, saying it lacked Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White's signature and the state seal.

Late Tuesday, Feinstein urged the Senate to settle the matter.

State unemployment claim systems are overwhelmed

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP)—Electronic unemployment filing systems have crashed in at least three states in recent days amid an unprecedented crush of thousands of newly jobless Americans seeking benefits, and other states were adjusting their systems to avoid being next.

About 4.5 million Americans are collecting jobless benefits, a 26-year high, so the Web sites and phone systems now commonly used to file for benefits are being tested like never before.

Even those that are holding up under the strain are in many cases leaving filers on the line for hours, or kissing them off with an "all circuits are busy" message. Agencies have been scrambling to hire hundreds more workers to handle the calls.

Systems in New York, North Carolina and Ohio were shut down completely by technical glitches and heavy volume, and labor officials in several other states are reporting higher-than-normal use.

"Regardless of when you call, be prepared to wait and just hang on. Try not to get frustrated," said Howard Cosgrove, a spokesman for the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, which boosted its staff of telephone operators by 25 percent last month to cope with a phone system that has been overloaded for weeks. "We sympathize, we're on their side, we're doing our best to help them out."

The nation's unemployment rate in November zoomed to 6.7 percent, a 15-year high. Economists predict it will rise to 7 percent in December, with another 500,000 jobs probably cut last month. The government releases its monthly employment report on Friday.

Some states attribute the increase in call volume in part to an extension of federal emergency unemployment compensation from 13 weeks to 20 weeks in late November.

CNN: Gupta approached about surgeon general post

WASHINGTON (AP)—President-elect Barack Obama has approached CNN's chief medical correspondent, Sanjay Gupta, to be the country's next surgeon general, the cable network said Tuesday. CNN said it has kept Gupta from reporting on health care policy and other matters involving the incoming Obama administration since learning he was under consideration for the post. Two Democrats with knowledge of the discussions over the surgeon general spot said Gupta was under consideration but cautioned there was not yet a final decision on who would fill the post. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media on the matter.

Obama's transition office did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Gupta hosts "House Call" on CNN, contributes reports to CBS News, and writes a column for Time magazine. He is a neurosurgeon and is on the faculty at Emory University School of Medicine in Atlanta. During the Clinton administration, he was a White House fellow and special adviser to then-first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton.

The surgeon general typically isn't heavily involved in shaping an administration's policy, but it can be a very effective bully pulpit. Past surgeons general have proved instrumental in battling tobacco and AIDS.

Having such a well-known TV personality could bring the surgeon general attention not seen since C. Everett Koop help the position under President Ronald Reagan. Koop is best known for pushing to make AIDS a public health issue rather than a moral issue, and Reagan faced pressure to fire him. Koop has said Reagan never interfered.

Asia

Japan wants anti-whalers barred from ports

TOKYO (AP)—Japan said Tuesday it plans to ask Australia and possibly New Zealand and Chile to ban an anti-whaling protest ship from using their ports to refuel, heightening a cat-and-mouse game in Antarctic waters between Japan's whaling fleet and the conservationists.

The Sea Shepherd group has said its anti-whaling ship, the Steve Irwin, has left pursuit of Japan's whaling fleet after chasing it for 2,000 miles (3,200 kilometers) and is now headed to port to refuel. It suggested on its Web site it will seek a port call in Australia, but has not provided further details.

Japan, which considers the actions of the Steve Irwin to be tantamount to piracy, reacted Tuesday by saying it will ask countries where the ship might make port calls to refuse it entry.

"We are going to request a port closure against it," Foreign Ministry official Chiharu Tsuruoka said. "They have obstructed our activities in the past, and their action is extremely dangerous. They are like pirates."

Tsuruoka said Tokyo has not made such a request yet because it is not clear where the Steve Irwin will go. He said the possibilities have been limited down to Australia, New Zealand and Chile.

The Steve Irwin's captain, Paul Watson, said he intended to dock in Australia to challenge that country's support for his efforts despite the Japanese pressure for a port closure.

"After chasing the Japanese whaling fleet for over 2,000 miles, the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society ship Steve Irwin must return to port for fuel," the group said on its Web site Sunday. "Although the ship is as close to Puntarenas, Chile as it is to Hobart, Tasmania and even closer to Dunedin, New Zealand, Capt. Paul Watson has decided that the ship will return to Australia."

Last year an Australian customs ship tracked the Japanese fleet in the Antarctic Ocean, gathering evidence for a possible legal battle against whaling.

Japan has temporarily suspended its whale hunt in Antarctic waters after a crewman apparently fell overboard from one of the vessels in the six-ship whaling fleet. The accident was not believed related to the Sea Shepherd protests.

The Japanese fleet plans to harvest up to 935 minke whales and 50 fin whales this year. Under International Whaling Commission rules, the mammals may be killed for research but not for commercial purposes. Opponents say the Japanese research expeditions are a cover for commercial whaling, which was banned in 1986.

AP

In this Dec. 26, 2008 file photo provided by Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, anti-whaling protestors in the ship M/V *Steve Irwin*, right, throw butyric acid onto the deck of the Japanese whaling ship, the Kaiko Maru, during a close encounter in the Antarctic Ocean.

China faces economic pain, sensitive anniversaries

BEIJING (AP)—The year ahead will challenge Chinese security officials increasingly nervous about social stability, the nation's top police officer said, amid concerns about gang violence, separatism and dissident plans to mark the 20th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square protests.

Leaders are particularly anxious about how the cooling economy, and the accompanying loss of jobs, will affect social order.

"The present situation of maintaining national security and social stability is grave," Public Security Minister Meng Jianzhu warned leading officers in Beijing, official state media reported Tuesday.

Meng called for specific measures to head off disruptions during Oct. 1 celebrations to mark 60 years of communist rule.

The anniversary is one of at least three sensitive dates that opponents of the authoritarian regime could seize on as symbolically rich opportunities to stage demonstrations or issue calls for political reform.

"I worry a social crisis is highly possible in 2009," Yang Fengchun, a political scientist at Peking University's School of Government.

Joblessness will compound simmering dissatisfaction among the poor over corruption, abysmal public services, and the yawning gap between rich and poor, Yang said. The children of migrants, unused to rural life, could be a particular source of instability if left without schools or jobs, he said.

The flight of foreign investment, deflation, falling pay, and bankruptcies, already have led to the loss of 10 million jobs, the official magazine Outlook Weekly reported this month, citing government statistics.

It said November saw a near doubling of numbers of migrants working in Beijing involved in pay disputes.

Many Chinese have been willing to accept single-party rule and curbs to their civil liberties as long as the leadership delivers steady economic growth; there are fears that a downturn could spark widespread unrest.

India: Pakistanis 'must have' supported Mumbai attack

NEW DELHI (AP)—India's prime minister said Tuesday that Pakistani authorities "must have had" a hand in the Mumbai siege, a remark dismissed by Pakistan as propaganda that could undermine efforts to bring the perpetrators to justice.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh repeated India's allegations that the November attacks were was carried out by the Pakistan-based militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba. But in his most forceful speech on the subject, Singh stopped just short of accusing Islamabad of directly aiding the gunmen.

"There is enough evidence to show that, given the sophistication and military precision of the attack, it must have had the support of some official agencies in Pakistan," the Indian leader said, while criticizing what he called Islamabad's reluctance to crack down on militants operating in their territory.

Singh's comments seemed aimed at keeping tensions between the bitter rivals at a slow burn and reflected widespread belief that multiple power centers run Pakistan.

Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari meanwhile called for recognition of his country's efforts to crack down on extremists.

"We expect our friends to have the same understanding, to rise above these stateless actors who are trying to create a problem in the region," Zardari told reporters Tuesday in Afghanistan, where he was making his first official visit since being sworn in.

Pakistan calls for foreign support, not troops

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)—Pakistan's president called Tuesday for foreign allies to provide more support—not more troops—to help win the battle against extremist militias along its volatile border with Afghanistan.

Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari said his country's forces, together with the Afghan military, could do the fighting themselves if given the right international support.

The comments come ahead of an expected influx of 20,000 American troops into Afghanistan to combat a Taliban insurgency that has sent violence skyrocketing in the last two years.

On his first official visit to Afghanistan since taking office in September, Zardari also discussed trade partnerships with Afghan President Hamid Karzai.

"We and my brother Karzai, we are going to fight them. And to the world we say, 'Help us. We can fight. We can look out for ourselves. We want to win. We have the strength. All we need is the support. Given the proper support, we can do the job better and cheaper and easier than you can do.'"

Pakistan and Afghanistan are dependent on each other for any long-lasting peace. Al-Qaida and Taliban fighters operate on both sides of the hard-to-police Afghan-Pakistan border, sometimes seeking sanctuary in Pakistan's tribal areas to launch attacks into Afghanistan, or within Pakistan.

Afghanistan's war effort also depends heavily on supplies trucked in across mountain passes from Pakistan.

Though neither the Pakistan nor Afghan governments have strong control over the border area, the two presidents said they have made progress in working together against the extremists.

ASIAN BRIEFS

Illegal exports endanger box turtles in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP)—The box turtle is disappearing across Malaysia because of increased illegal hunting for its meat and use in traditional Chinese medicine, wildlife activists said Wednesday. TRAFFIC, a wildlife trade monitoring network, said in a new report that the Malayan Box Turtle "is in peril due to overexploitation" despite a Malaysian government ban on its export since 2005. Since the ban, export of turtles for the pet trade in Japan, Europe and the United States ceased, but TRAFFIC found widespread evidence of continuing illegal export, mainly to Hong Kong, China and to a lesser extent Singapore. Exotic meats from wildlife are much sought after by the Chinese, who also use body parts of animals for traditional medicines including aphrodisiacs. There is no commercial breeding of the animal in Malaysia or elsewhere because it is expensive and time-consuming.

Sri Lanka seizes key rebel defense line in north

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP)—Sri Lankan troops broke through the Tamil Tigers' northern defense lines Tuesday, the military said, opening another active front in their war against the beleaguered guerrillas. The capture of Muhamalai on the Jaffna peninsula was another blow to the separatist rebels amid a surging military offensive that has backed them into a small pocket of jungle in the northeast. "Our forces are moving, and very confidently, and they are moving forward," defense spokesman Keheliya Rambukwella said. He said the government hopes to clear the entire north of rebels in the "coming weeks" and effectively end the 25-year-old civil war that has killed more than 70,000 people on this Indian Ocean island nation. For more than a decade, the rebels have run a de facto state in parts of northern Sri Lanka, squeezed between the government-held Jaffna peninsula—the northernmost point in the country—and the rest of the island to the south.

Stranded sea cow saved by Filipino fishermen

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—Filipino fishermen rescued an endangered sea cow, pushing it back into open water after it was stranded off a beach in the western Philippines, conservationists said Tuesday. The World Wide Fund for Nature said two fishermen tied a rope around the refrigerator-sized mammal on Jan. 1, one day after it was trapped by low tide on the shore of Palawan island's Puerto Princesa city. After recuperating in the waist-high water, the 8.5-foot-long (2.6-meter-long) animal was declared fit for release by WWF activists. Onlookers cheered as the sea cow—nicknamed Enero, or January in the Tagalog language—was slowly coaxed out of the lagoon. WWF said the gentle creatures, scientifically known as Dugong Dugon, had once plied the Philippine archipelago until hunting and habitat degradation wiped out most of the herds. The International Union for Conservation of Nature has classified the species as vulnerable or facing a high risk of extinction. There are no estimates of how many still inhabit the shallow waters of the Indo-Pacific. Thriving populations are now protected in the Philippines' northern Isabela province, the southern Mindanao region and Palawan, WWF said.

World

Gaza truce proposed after Israeli shell kills 30

Palestinians inspect the rubble of a destroyed building following Israeli forces' operations in Rafah refugee camp, southern Gaza Strip, Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2009. AP

GAZA CITY, Gaza (AP)—France and Egypt announced an initiative to stop the fighting in Gaza late Tuesday, hours after Israeli mortar shells exploded near a U.N. school sheltering hundreds of people displaced by the onslaught on Hamas militants. At least 30 Palestinians died, staining streets with blood.

French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner released no details of the cease-fire plan, saying at the U.N. Security Council that the presidents of his country and Egypt were awaiting a response from Israel.

Israeli officials in Jerusalem declined immediate comment on the announcement, which came amid diplomatic efforts by the U.S. and other nations to resolve a conflict between Israel and the Islamic militants of Hamas that has seen 600 people killed in 11 days.

President-elect Barack Obama broke his silence on the crisis Tuesday, saying that "the loss of civilian life in Gaza and in Israel is a source of deep concern for me." He declined to go further, reiterating his stance that the U.S. has only one president at a time.

Israel's military said its shelling at the school—the deadliest single episode since Israeli ground forces invaded Gaza on Saturday after a week of air bombardment—was a response to mortar fire from within the school and said Hamas militants were using civilians as cover.

Two residents of the area who spoke with The Associated Press by telephone said they saw a small group of militants firing mortar rounds from a street near the school, where 350 people had gathered to get away from the shelling. They spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal.

Egypt and France propose plan to end Gaza conflict

UNITED NATIONS (AP)—The presidents of Egypt and France have proposed a plan to end the escalating Israeli-Hamas conflict in Gaza, French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner said Tuesday.

Kouchner told a high-level meeting of the U.N. Security Council that the plan would bring together the main parties, including the Palestinian Authority, to take "all measures" to end the conflict, including the key issues of protecting Gaza's borders and reopening all crossings.

Kouchner said Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and French President Nicolas Sarkozy announced the plan at a press conference.

"We are awaiting the Israeli response and we harbor hope that it will be a positive one," Kouchner said.

When asked about a reported possible cease-fire proposal, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's spokesman, Mark Regev told AP: "We are holding off comments on that for the time being."

The Mubarak-Sarkozy plan got immediate support from Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, whose Palestinian Authority lost control of Gaza to Hamas in July 2007.

"I express my support for the plan set in motion today by president Mubarak and president Sarkozy," said Abbas who flew to New York to attend the council meeting in hopes of getting a legally binding resolution for an immediate cease-fire.

Kouchner told the council that "president Mubarak has just proposed, together with President Sarkozy, at a press conference a plan for a resolution to the crisis to be found."

"A halt to violence is the immediate priority," he said. "The Security Council must support and encourage these promising endeavors. All states in the region must assist this and contribute toward this hope favoring moderation."

Aruba prosecutor: End is near in Holloway case

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP)—Aruban prosecutors said Tuesday their investigation into the 2005 disappearance of U.S. teenager Natalee Holloway is nearing the end and appealed for anyone with information to come forward.

Chief Prosecutor Hans Mos said his office still needs "at least another few months" to investigate statements made by the only remaining suspect, Joran van der Sloot, during a hidden-camera interview which was broadcast on Dutch television last year.

But he then said prosecutors "are approaching the end of this lengthy investigation."

"If you have relevant information—no matter how small or uninteresting it may seem—please notify my office or the police," Mos said in a statement Tuesday.

Holloway, from Mountain Brook, Alabama, was last seen in May 2005 leaving a bar in the Aruban capital Oranjestad with Van der Sloot on the final night of a high school graduation trip to the island. She was 18 at the time.

No trace of Holloway has ever been found despite extensive searches involving hundreds of volunteers, Aruban soldiers, FBI agents and even Dutch F-16 jets with special equipment.

Aruban investigators reopened the case last year based on the hidden-camera recordings made by Dutch television crime reporter Peter R. de Vries.

But judges rejected an attempt to re-arrest Van der Sloot for statements he made on the Dutch TV show. The hidden-camera recordings showed Van der Sloot saying he was with Holloway when she died on the Dutch Caribbean island and that he had a friend dump her body at sea.

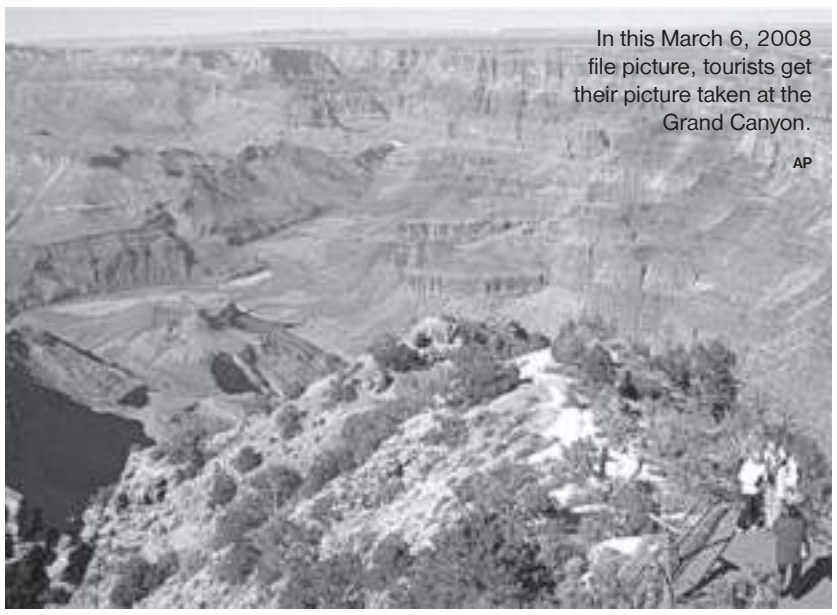
Mos, without disclosing specifics, said the TV program caused a "new stream of information" regardless of the appeals court decision blocking authorities from arresting Van der Sloot for a third time based on the statements.

"My office does not want to disclose these results to the suspect and thus make him wiser even before he has been confronted with these results," Mos said, referring to Van der Sloot, who was last known to be living in Thailand.

In November, Ann Angela, a spokeswoman for the Aruba Prosecutors' Office, said authorities hoped to decide by the end of 2008 whether to prosecute Van der Sloot or close the case for good.

Attorneys for Van der Sloot did not immediately respond to messages seeking comment and there was no answer at his parents' home in Aruba.

Grand Canyon, Loch Ness compete as nature wonders



In this March 6, 2008 file picture, tourists get their picture taken at the Grand Canyon. AP

GENEVA (AP)—The Grand Canyon, Mount Everest and Loch Ness will vie with more than 200 other spectacular places in the next phase of the global competition for the New 7 Wonders of Nature, organizers said Wednesday. The 261 nominees from 222 countries include some of the most famous mountain peaks, lakes, and other attractions, such as the Great Barrier Reef and Niagara Falls.

Over a billion people are expected to join in Internet voting that will nominate 77 semifinalists for the top natural wonders, which will share in the glory already enjoyed by the seven man-made wonders chosen 18 months ago.

"We are calling on people all over the world to actively show their appreciation for our ... natural world by joining together to celebrate the most extraordinary sites on our planet," said Tia Viering, spokeswoman of the New 7 Wonders campaign. The Swiss-based nonprofit foundation collected 441 nominations over the Internet since it opened the selection process in 2007.

The foundation then chose the top vote-getter from each country, making a list of 222 sites. The overall list rose to 261 with the inclusion of sites shared by two or more countries—such as Niagara Falls and Lake Superior between Canada and the United States, and the Matterhorn, between Switzerland and Italy.

WORLD BRIEFS

Natural gas shortages slam many European nations

VIENNA, Austria (AP)—The Russia-Ukraine natural gas dispute hit Europe with the force of a winter storm Tuesday, cutting or limiting supplies to at least a dozen nations. Tens of thousands of people were left without heat and governments scrambled to find alternate energy sources. Shocked by how fast the shortages were spreading, the European Union demanded a quick end to the quarrel—a sharp turnaround from their earlier stance, when officials had downplayed the conflict between Moscow and Kiev as primarily a business matter. But by Tuesday evening, gauges on delivery pipelines to seven countries—including some depending totally on Russian gas—pointed toward zero and an increasing number of other nations reported significant reductions. The Ukrainian gas company Naftogaz said Russia's gas giant Gazprom had sharply reduced its shipments to Europe through pipelines crossing Ukraine, triggering the cuts. Gazprom in turn accused Ukraine of shutting three of four transit pipelines.

Member of Iraq president party killed in drive-by

BAGHDAD (AP)—Gunmen have killed a member of Iraqi President Jalal Talabani's political party in a drive-by shooting in the northern city of Kirkuk, Iraqi police officials said Tuesday. Subhi Hassan, who handles political relations for the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, and a bodyguard were killed Monday after unidentified gunmen chased down their car after it passed through a checkpoint, said Police Brigadier Ahmed Hawandi. A third person in the car was wounded, Hawandi said, adding Iraqi police were investigating the shooting. The shooting is the latest in a spate of killings that appear to be politically motivated and come in advance of the Jan. 31 Iraq-wide provincial elections. Although violence is down 80 percent nationwide since early this year, U.S. officials say the security situation remains tenuous, and some areas of the country are still dangerous.

Environment

New ocean monuments give Bush a Blue Legacy

WASHINGTON (PRNewswire)—President Bush yesterday designated three new marine national monuments in the Pacific Ocean totaling more than 195,000 square miles, an area greater than Oregon and Washington combined.

Together with Papahanaumokuakea Marine National Monument, which was established in 2006 in the northwestern Hawaiian Islands, President Bush will have designated monuments protecting 335,561 square miles of ocean, a larger area of the world's marine environment than protected by any other person in history.

"This historic action by President Bush protects some of the world's most unique and biologically significant ocean habitat," said Joshua S. Reichert, managing director of the Pew Environment Group. "Together with the Hawaii marine monument established two years ago, this marks the end of an era in which humans have increasingly understood the need to conserve vanishing wild places on land but failed to comprehend the similar plight of our oceans. It comes none too soon."

The largest of the protected areas surrounds the Northern Mariana Islands and includes the Mariana Trench, the deepest canyon on earth.

The Mariana Islands monument alone protects 95,000 square miles, encompassing areas believed to harbor some of the oldest known life on the DNA tree. By itself, this monument is the third largest marine reserve in the world. Among its diverse and remarkable underwater features are the second known boiling pool of liquid sulfur (the first pool was discovered on Io, one of Jupiter's moons); huge, active mud volcanoes—one more than 31 miles across; and highly acidic hydrothermal vents that provide a unique natural laboratory for the study of ocean acidification and its effects on coral reefs and shallow-water sea life.

A marine mammal survey in the area found 19 species, including several rare species of beaked whales. The land areas shelter the endangered Micronesian megapode, which is the only bird known to use volcanic heat to incubate its eggs, threatened fruit bats, more than a dozen species of migratory seabirds with breeding populations numbering over 200,000 and giant coconut crabs -- the largest land-living arthropod in the world.

ON THE NET
http://www.globaloceanlegacy.org

For the past two years, the Pew Environment Group's Global Ocean Legacy Program has worked with the Bush Administration as well as citizens and elected officials in the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas to promote the concept of a large-scale marine reserve in the waters surrounding the Mariana Islands. More than 200 local businesses and 6,000 citizens signed petitions supporting world-class marine monument designation.

A tremendous mussel biomass adorns the lava ridges at the crest of submarine NW Eifuku volcano north of Uracas near the proposed monument. These seven inch mussels are so densely massed that they obscure the bottom. The white galatheid crabs are 2.5 inches long. *Image courtesy of the NOAA Submarine Ring of Fire 2004 Exploration and the NOAA Vents Program.*

Brown Booby and nest on Maug Island. Seabird populations in the Northern Mariana Islands are significant for Micronesia, and Maug and Uracas islands support regionally important seabird colonies. *Credit: NOAA, Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center, Coral Reef Ecosystem Division, Russell Moffitt, photographer*

In partnership with the islands' business community and Friends of the Monument, a local organization promoting the Mariana Trench Marine National Monument, the Pew Environment Group helped organize more than 100 public meetings to vet the proposed monument in open forums. It also developed the first comprehensive scientific profile of the biological and geological resources contained within the proposed monument site, plus an assessment of the potential economic benefits of monument designation to the Marianas economy.

"We are proud that President Bush has recognized the importance and richness of the Mariana Island waters," said Ike Cabrera, chairman of the Saipan-based Friends of the Monument. "We can now share with the world this special place our people have long cherished."

These remote and beautiful islands and waters have a rich history. Wake Island and Saipan were the sites of important battles in WWII, and islands in the Mariana Archipelago harbored some of the last Japanese holdouts of the war.

"We will gain immeasurably more from having these places kept safe than we would from plundering in the short term whatever commercial resources they might contain," said Reichert. "In his efforts to balance competing interests, the president weighed the long term benefits to the marine environment and to the American people of protecting these places before they are ruined, and decided they are worth more intact than whatever commercial benefits might be derived from fishing, drilling or mining them. The President's decision is a tribute to common sense."

Global Ocean Legacy is a project initiated by the Pew Environment Group in partnership with the Oak Foundation, the Robertson Foundation and the Sandler Family Supporting Foundation. Its goal is to work with local citizens and governments to secure the designation of a handful of world-class, no-take marine reserves that will provide ecosystem scale benefits and help conserve our global marine heritage.

Friends of the Monument praises Bush

The Friends of the Monument, a coalition of indigenous and resident people of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands who support designation and protection of the important ocean resources along the Mariana Trench, applauded President Bush yesterday for declaring a Marianas Trench Marine National Monument at a ceremony in Washington, DC Tuesday.

The new marine monument will encompass 95,000 square miles of oceans surrounding the islands of Uracas, Maug and Asuncion, 21 hydrothermal volcanic vents and the entire stretch of the Marianas Trench.

Deputy Labor Secretary Cinta Kaipat, one of the monument's earliest supporters, said, "It's a great day for us all and for the world! I'm very proud of the team and everyone who worked so hard to make this happen."

ON THE NET
http://marianamonument.blogspot.com

By the time of the designation, local support for the monument was near unanimous in the capital island of Saipan. In the eleventh hour, CNMI Gov. Benigno Fitial, Speaker of the House Arnold Palacios and Senate President Pete P Reyes joined the 6,000 petition signers, 206 businesses, and nearly 600 letter writers who asked President Bush to designate a monument in the Marianas.

Local environmentalist Ken Kramer, who quit his job with USDA to volunteer with the Friends of the Monument, had praise for the 60 volunteers and dozens of people who wrote supportive letters to the editor.

Kramer said, "Congratulations to everyone for a job well done. There was certainly a lot of blood, sweat and tears that went into the making of this monument. I am happy to be a part of this history making adventure to save the planet. We are all environmental superheroes."

More information on the Friends of the Monument and the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument can be found at http://marianamonument.blogspot.com. ***(PR)***

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Gov. Benigno R. Fitial, first lady Josie Fitial, and the Friends of the Monument pose for a picture in Washington, D.C. Fitial has come out in support of the marine monument and stood next to President Bush during the designation.

Life & Style

Best-selling 'God' author faces plagiarism claim

NEW YORK (AP)—Neale Donald Walsch, best-selling author of "Conversations with God," said Tuesday that he unwittingly passed off another writer's Christmas anecdote as his own in a recent blog post.

As a result, Walsch's blog on the spirituality Web site Beliefnet.com has been shut down. The Web site said in a statement that Walsch had failed to properly credit and attribute material from another author.

Walsch had written about what he described as his son's holiday concert two decades ago in which children were to hold up letters spelling "Christmas Love." One of the children held the "m" upside down, so the audience got the message "Christwas Love," according to the retelling.

Author Candy Chand said in an interview Tuesday that she stumbled onto Walsch's post when she ran "Christmas Love" through an Internet search engine. She immediately recognized her own words, from her story based on her son's kindergarten Christmas pageant. She contacted Walsch and Beliefnet.

The story first appeared in a spiritual magazine in 1999, and was later anthologized. Chand said she copyrighted the story in 2005, in part because it had appeared on the Internet uncredited. The story was published as the illustrated book "Christmas Love" for this past Christmas, she said.

Walsch wrote on his blog Tuesday he was "truly mystified" about what happened and apologized. He said he had been telling the story for years in public talks and "somewhere along the way, internalized it as my own experience."

"As a published author myself, I would never use another author's words as my own," Walsch wrote. "Yet I have apparently done just that—although with no deliberate intent to do so."

Chand, of Rancho Murieta, Calif., said she did not believe Walsch's account.

"It's pretty difficult for me to believe that someone has a memory lapse that is word for word my story," she said. "He deleted the first paragraph. That's it."

Beliefnet said in a statement Walsch "failed to properly credit and attribute material from another author. As a result, Mr. Walsch has decided to remove himself from Beliefnet's blogging roster, a decision we will support in order to protect the mission and integrity of our site and community. As a faith-based web portal, Beliefnet will continue to hold ourselves and our writers to the highest standards of trust."

Winfrey Web site adds Holocaust story disclaimer

NEW YORK (AP)—Oprah Winfrey has yet to comment on Herman Rosenblat and his debunked story of meeting his future wife in a Nazi concentration camp. But a brief disclaimer has been added to her Web site, http://www.oprah.com , which still devotes substantial space to the Rosenblat romance.

Winfrey

"On December 27, 2008, Herman Rosenblat admitted to fictionalizing portions of his life story, including how he met his wife," reads the update, which was posted Monday. "Based on this admission, the publisher of his forthcoming memoir—'Angel at the Fence'—canceled plans to print his book."

The update appears at the bottom of the first of three pages about Rosenblat, his wife Roma and their two appearances on Winfrey's television show. Winfrey spokeswoman Angela DePaul, when asked Tuesday why Rosenblat's story—listed on the site as the first example of "Love Lessons From Amazing Couples"—wasn't removed, referred to the update posted by "the oprah.com editorial team" and declined further comment.

Rosenblat, 79, a resident of North Miami Beach, Fla., was a Holocaust survivor who for years had endeared himself to Winfrey and others by recalling how he and his wife met on opposite sides of a barbed-wire fence at a sub-camp of Buchenwald in the 1940s and were reunited more than a decade later on a blind date in New York. Berkley Books, an imprint of Penguin Group (USA), had planned to release his memoir in February.

But after scholars, friends and family members challenged him, Rosenblat acknowledged the story was untrue and Berkley pulled the book. A planned feature film is still scheduled to begin production this year, with producer Harris Salomon saying that the script may note the "fabricated elements of their wartime love story."

Winfrey's site also refers to another discredited guest, James Frey. In 2005, Winfrey chose Frey's "A Million Little Pieces" for her book club, but later brought him back on the show and chewed him out after he had acknowledged fabricating substantial parts of his memoir.

"A Million Little Pieces" remains on the list of Winfrey picks, but the Web site emphasizes the memoir's fall, including a transcript of Frey's unhappy return. The text for an earlier, more favorable link to Frey's book, labeled "A Powerful Story," has been removed.

The Stooges guitarist Ron Asheton found dead at 60

AP

In this image released by Virgin Records, Iggy Pop, center, is shown with Ron Asheton, left, and Scott Asheton of The Stooges. Ron Asheton of The Stooges was found dead in his home on Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2009, in Ann Arbor, Mich.

DETROIT (AP)—Ron Asheton, the guitarist for the Stooges whose raw sound helped inspire the first generation of punk musicians, has died. He was 60.

Asheton was found at his Ann Arbor home early Tuesday morning by police officers after they were called by an associate who had not heard from him in several days, said city police Sgt. Brad Hill.

There were no signs of foul play, and the death appeared to be of natural causes, Hill said.

Asheton was a founding member of the Stooges, the influential protopunk band formed in Ann Arbor in 1967, along with his brother, Scott.

Lead singer Iggy Pop called Asheton "my best friend" in a statement Tuesday, and the band expressed shock at his death.

"For all that knew him behind the facade of Mr. Cool & Quirky, he was a kind-hearted, genuine, warm person who always believed that people meant well even if they did not," the band said in a written statement. "As a musician Ron was The Guitar God, idol to follow and inspire others. That is how he will be remembered by people who had a great pleasure to work with him, learn from him and share good and bad times with him."

Asheton's powerful, distorted guitar on songs like "I Wanna Be Your Dog" and "T.V. Eye" was a hallmark of the group's sound. His "technically adept but also beautifully raw" style was heavily influenced by free jazz and created "beauty out of noise," said Brian Cogan, a punk-music historian at Molloy College on New York's Long Island.

"He invents the template for punk-rock guitar," Cogan said. "He's the one who allows Johnny Ramone and the guys in the Dictators to play the way they do."

When he was named the 29th greatest guitarist of all time in 2003 by Rolling Stone, the magazine described Asheton as "the Detroit punk who made the Stooges' music reek like a puddle of week-old biker sweat."

After recording three albums in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Stooges split and Iggy Pop went on to a successful solo career. Asheton played guitar for bands including the New Order, New Race, Destroy All Monsters and Dark Carnival.

In 2003, Asheston reunited with the rest of the Stooges and a new album, "The Weirdness," was released in 2007.

Alan Colmes plays Colbert's sidekick for a day

NEW YORK (AP)—Divorced from his longtime co-host Sean Hannity, Alan Colmes was adopted by Stephen Colbert—for a day, at least. On Monday's "The Colbert Report," Colbert introduced the Fox News commentator as his new co-host.

It was the first episode of the Comedy Central show following the holiday break, and Colbert unveiled a completely new format, dubbing the show "Colbert & Colmes." The new design featured a "C & C" graphic and a chair behind the desk for Colmes (albeit one a foot or two shorter than Colbert's).

In November, Fox News announced that Colmes, the liberal half of "Hannity & Colmes" for the last 12 years, was leaving the show but would remain a commentator on the channel.

Sensing he could push around his liberal sidekick, Colbert—who plays a mock conservative pundit—gave Colmes a list of preapproved comments, such as, "Hamburger, you're good," and "Aw, snap!"

Colbert made it clear he was still in charge. Graphics repeatedly overlaid Colmes' face and when Colbert went to interview his guest—John King of CNN—he told Colmes, "No, no. Stay, stay."

AP

In this image released by Comedy Central, Alan Colmes, left, appears with host Stephen Colbert on the set of Comedy Central's "The Colbert Report," Monday, Jan. 5, 2009, in New York.

At the end of the show, the comic said he and Colmes would be back every night with "hard-hitting political opinions" (pointing to himself) "and top-notch listening" (pointing to Colmes).

But an argument ensued when Colmes pointed out errors in a metaphor Colbert concocted. The two parted ways with Colmes exclaiming "Booyah, Colmes away!" before, in a puff of smoke, he turned into a bat.

Reached by phone Tuesday, Colmes had returned to his human self.

"It was very well done," said Colmes, who is developing a new weekend show for Fox News.

As to how working with Colbert compares to working with Hannity, Colmes said: "Both are extremely gracious, although I feel a lot taller sitting next to Sean Hannity."

'Idol' judge: Male contestants hold edge

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Kara DioGuardi was fretting about being the new face of "American Idol," and she put the blame on hungry mosquitoes.

"Here I am in Hawaii and I wake up yesterday and I'm covered in mosquito bites, 15 to 20, and it looks like I have the chicken pox," the songwriter-producer said on Tuesday.

"Nobody cares about a songwriter with mosquito bites. But a judge on `Idol' who's about to go in front of the press, that's a whole other story," said DioGuardi, who has joined the "American Idol" judging panel and has a whirlwind promotional schedule next week in New York that includes David Letterman's show.

DioGuardi is a hit machine whose songs have been recorded by Gwen Stefani, Faith Hill, Marc Anthony and others, including past "Idol" winners. She represents a big change for the hit Fox series, which is adding a new voice to those of veteran judges Simon Cowell, Randy Jackson and Paula Abdul in an eighth-season effort to freshen its familiar formula.

"American Idol" was the No. 1 program last season despite a small ratings dip, and DioGuardi said she's honored to be part of it. The season debut, and hers, is Jan. 13 (8-10 p.m. EST).

"I hope people find I bring something to the show that's different, and I can help these contestants learn something, whether they win or not," she said.

AP

In this Aug. 26, 2008 file photo, Kara DioGuardi, the newest judge on "American Idol", arrives at a promotional event for the show in New York.

For some would-be pop stars DioGuardi encountered during auditions for the show, the lesson is a hard one.

"A bunch of them would come on and really believe that they were great. That was one of the biggest shocks for me. I was thinking, `Wow, are you kidding? ... I think this is going to be a hobby, and that's a great hobby to have.'"

DioGuardi said she spotted some uniquely talented performers during tryouts, especially among the men. But the pressure is on them to keep improving or they'll leave the door open for an underdog.

"They may have been great at the beginning but as the season goes on they have to keep upping it," she said.

Speaking of gender, don't expect to see any dramatic clashes between DioGuardi and Abdul, who is losing her throne as the sole female judge.

"Paula and I co-wrote my first international hit (Kylie Minogue's 'Spinning Around')," DioGuardi said. "I feel indebted to her for that, and I've never been of the thinking that women should drag each other down."

What about Cowell's claims that the two "girls" have ganged up on him when it comes to ratings contestants?

"There's definitely times Paula and I voice our opinion and it's of the same ilk. And if that's not what Simon thinks, then there's a little bit of tension there. But it's all fun. Nobody's going back to their room crying," DioGuardi said.

Except, she concedes, maybe some contestants.

Prosecutors to Polanski: All is not forgiven

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Fugitive director Roman Polanski received a message from prosecutors in a sexually explicit court motion Tuesday that all is not forgiven and they will fight dismissal of a three-decade-old conviction for raping a 13-year-old.

The documents filed by the district attorney's office would be rated "X" in movie terminology and contained a reminder that the rape occurred at the home of Academy Award-winning actor Jack Nicholson.

In a footnote, the document said: "Jack Nicholson was not home at the time of the events and had no knowledge of the activities of Roman Polanski."

The motion, drawing on descriptions contained in transcripts of grand jury hearings in 1977, provided details of a photo shoot in which the young girl was given champagne and part of a Quaalude pill, was told to disrobe and was subjected to oral copulation, forced intercourse and sodomy by Polanski.

It said the victim asked him to stop several times and that she was in tears when Polanski drove her home.

"At some point, the defendant warned the victim not to tell her mother about what had happened, adding that `This is our secret,'" the motion said.

The girl, now a 44-year-old woman, has said she never wanted Polanski to go to prison and feels the case should be dismissed. The 75-year-old Polanski, living in exile in France, wants to return to the United States.

His lawyers, prompted by a recent documentary alleging judicial and prosecutorial misconduct, filed a motion in December to dismiss the case.

Deputy District Attorney David Walgren argued in Tuesday's motion that Polanski's request can't be heard in court without his presence. If he returned, Polanski could be arrested. His lawyers have said the matter can be heard in his absence.

Walgren said he was not admitting judicial or prosecutorial error, but "the alleged misconduct occurred after the defendant pleaded freely and voluntarily to a felony, with the understanding that the judge would determine the appropriate sentence."

A hearing on the matter is scheduled for Jan. 21 in Los Angeles County Superior Court. Walgren said the hearing should be canceled if Polanski doesn't plan to attend.

In a motion filed Monday, Polanski's lawyer asked to disqualify the entire staff of the Los Angeles County Superior Court from the case for bias against Polanski and said the California Judicial Council should appoint a neutral judge from another county to preside over the hearing. The prosecution's filing on Tuesday did not address that issue.

In a statement after the prosecution papers were filed, Polanski attorney Chad Hummel accused the district attorney's office of evading questions of judicial misconduct by focusing on the single issue of whether Polanski needs to be present for the hearing. He said the case should be moved out of Los Angeles County for review by an impartial judge.

Pixar animation pioneer Catmull earns Oscar

LOS ANGELES (AP)—One of the digital wizards behind such cartoon smashes as "WALL-E," "Ratatouille" and "Finding Nemo" is getting an Academy Award.

Pixar Animation co-founder Ed Catmull is receiving the Gordon E. Sawyer Award, an honorary Oscar statuette, for lifetime achievement in computer graphics for filmmaking.

Catmull is receiving the prize at the academy's Scientific and Technical Awards ceremony Feb. 7, which precedes the Feb. 22 Oscars.

It's the second honorary Oscar for Catmull. He's a previous recipient in 2000 for developing Pixar's RenderMan software, which has been used in digital imagery for 45 of the last 50 films nominated for the visual-effects Oscar.

Catmull also has three past scientific and technical awards from the academy.

In Celebration of Her New Life

Fermina Castro Belyeu

Passionately and lovingly known as
'Minang Lolli'
Was born on July 20, 1943 &
Called to her eternal rest by our heavenly father
on January 1, 2009

In her passing, she now joins her:

Husband: James Oscar Belyeu
Child: James Belyeu Jr.
Reared Son: Calistro C. Mafnas
Parents: Manuel Diaz Castro &
Francisca Maidesil Castro (Ngsiliong)
Siblings & David Castro, Baldebino Castro, Sr. Mary Frances,
Sabina C. Mafnas, Mary Belyeu,
In-Laws: Bobby & Joyce Belyeu and Cindy Belyeu

Her memories will forever remain in the hearts of her children:
William Kenneth Belyeu (William Jr., Brandon, Bert Jacob)
Harold & Kayla Belyeu (Samantha)
Noelani & James Walker
Sonia Belyeu & Glennn Mai (KJ, Jovani, Bryton. Kelly)
Tayna & Ray Camacho (Max, Luke, Noah, SeoniRae, Tayzalin)

Brother and in-laws:
Torcuato & Anna Castro; (†)Sabina C. & Leocardo Mafnas; (†)David & Simico Castro; Donald & Mary Belyeu; Mike & Sherry Belyeu; and Tommy & (†)Cindy Belyeu

Special Sister:
Delgadina C. Alepuyo

Nightly mass is offered at the San Roque church at 6:00 p.m. and immediately followed by the rosary. On Friday, January 9, 2009, the family will bring Fermina Ngsiliong Meidesil Castro Belyeu at 7 a.m. from CHC to the San Roque Church followed by the Responso and rosary with the Mass for Christian Burial at 11 a.m. immediately followed by the Internment at the San Roque cemetery.

Thank you for your thoughts and prayers.

From the Family

DEATH & FUNERAL ANNOUNCEMENT

MAXIMO CASTRO CRUZ

better known as
MAX PAKAKANG

Born: October 16, 1951 (Age: 57)
Died: January 02, 2009

Parents: †Francisco Cruz
†Dolores Castro Cruz
Parents-in-Law: †Alejandro Q. and †Maria A. Bermudes
Brothers: †Juan C. and †Daniel C. Cruz
Sister: †Dolores C. Camacho
Son: †Jerry B. Cruz
WIFE: Helen Bermudes Cruz
Children: Frank B. Cruz (Lorraine: Bryce); Max B. Cruz (Annie: Tyrez, Max Jr.)
Maynard B. Cruz (Kat: Yasmin) and Doreen B. Cruz
George Naputi (Nora: Sean, Connie (Jonathan George)
Grandson: Keanu G. Cruz (KJ)
Brother: Antonio Castro Cruz/Ignacia [Ben, Doris, Nora, Antonette, Gerrilyn, Polly Ann and Pamela]
Sisters-in-law: Ana P. Cruz [Agnes, Patricia, Frances, Doris, Jeanette, Tina, Paul, Daniel, Junior and Frankie]
Josephine B. Agulto/ Diego and Children, Rosa B. Lizama /Lorenzo and Children, Rita B. Agulto/Dard and Children
Brothers-in-law: Pedro B. Camacho/Jeanette [Daisie Mae, Jun Nickie, April Ling, Jude Peter, Evonne, Geraldine and Silvan]
Jose A. Bermudes/Doris and Children, Ramon A. Bermudes/Lucy and children
And numerous aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews and nieces

Daily masses at 6:00 a.m. followed by rosary at 7:00 p.m. at Kristo Rai Church.

On Saturday, January 10, 2009 the body will leave CHC Morgue to Kristo Rai Church at 12 noon followed by responso and rosary. Mass will be offered at 3:00 in the afternoon followed by his burial at Chalan Kanoa Cemetery.

Travolta family returns to US with son's remains

FREEPORT, Bahamas (AP)—Actor John Travolta and his wife, Kelly Preston, have returned to Florida with the remains of their 16-year-old son, Jett, who died at the family vacation home in Grand Bahama.

The couple received an urn with his ashes and left the island chain on Monday night, according to Obie Wilchcombe, a member of the Bahamas parliament and a family friend.

"Everything was in place, the cremation was completed, and they decided to leave," Wilchcombe said Tuesday. He said the family is back in Ocala, Fla., where they have a home.

Doctors in the Bahamas performed an autopsy on Jett on Monday but did not release results. However, a Bahamas undertaker said the teen's death certificate had "seizure" as the cause of death.

Jett Travolta had a history of seizures and was found unconscious Friday in a bathroom.

The body was in "great condition," said Glen Campbell, assistant director of the Bahamas funeral home that handled Jett's remains, though police officials had said the teen hit his head on a bathtub.

Funeral plans have not been announced.

In Ocala, Mayor Randy Ewers said the city sent the Travolta family condolences and will give them space and privacy.

"They're fantastic people, really family oriented," Ewers said. "We want to respect their privacy as much as possible."

In a public statement Sunday, Travolta, 54, and Preston, 46, said they were "heartbroken that our time with him was so brief."

Travolta tried CPR to revive his son, who may have died in his arms before an emergency medical technician took over, Usmagazine.com reported, citing Travolta attorneys Michael McDermott and Michael Ossi. They did not respond to calls from the AP on Monday.

Travolta and Preston have said Jett became very sick when he was 2 years old and was diagnosed with Kawasaki Syndrome, an illness that leads to inflamed blood vessels. Preston blamed household cleaners and fertilizers and said a detoxification program based on teachings from the Church of Scientology helped improve his health, according to People magazine.

Police said in a statement that Jett had not been seen since Thursday when a caretaker, Jeff Kathrain, found him unconscious late Friday morning. But McDermott said that wrongly left the impression that Jett was unsupervised. He said two caretakers were with Jett throughout the evening, and he does not believe the teen was in the bathroom for very long.

The couple also has an 8-year-old daughter, Ella Bleu.

AP

Diana McCarty of Citra, Fla., bows her head after laying a rose at the entrance to the Jumbolair Aviation Estates where actor John Travolta lives Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2009 near Ocala, Fla. Travolta and wife, Kelly Preston, returned to their Florida house with the remains of their 16-year-old son, Jett, who died at the family vacation home in Grand Bahama.

Small Fla. town embraces Travolta during tragedy

OCALA, Fla. (AP)—This small central Florida town is about as far from Hollywood as you can get. Maybe that's why actor John Travolta moved his family here.

The town square features a fondue restaurant, the social scene revolves around ranchers' soirees and horse riding is one of the main pastimes. Mobile home parks, peanut farms and moss-covered oak trees dot the landscape. There is little pretension or glitz.

Travolta and his wife Kelly Preston seem to fit in: They appeared on the cover of this month's Ocala Style magazine with big smiles, wearing jeans and sweaters.

Now, with the death of their 16-year-old son Jett, this is where they have come to grieve. On Monday night—four days after Jett was found unconscious in the family's vacation home in the Bahamas—Travolta and Preston flew back to Ocala.

The city is welcoming them quietly and respectfully.

Mayor Randy Ewers said the city sent the Travolta family condolences and would give them space and privacy.

"They're fantastic people, really family oriented," Ewers said. "We want to respect their privacy as much as possible."

Doctors in the Bahamas performed an autopsy on Jett on Monday but did not release results. A Bahamas undertaker said the teen's death certificate had "seizure" as the cause of death. The teen had a history of seizures; his body was cremated Monday and flown to the U.S. the same night.

A memorial service for Jett will be held Thursday for family and close friends in Ocala, his publicist said.

The Travoltas, who have been together since 1991, bought their unusual $8 million property in Ocala in 2003. The reason had nothing to do with the area's famed thoroughbred horse farms: Travolta, an avid pilot, was looking for a home where he could fly his many planes, including a Boeing 707 airliner, right to his front door.

The estate, located in a subdivision that boasts the largest private residential runway in the country, was featured on the cover of Architectural Digest in 2004. The style was inspired by Morris Lapidus, the architect of the Fontainebleau Hotel in Miami, famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright and Eero Saarinen, designer of Washington Dulles International Airport.

"If I can look out the bedroom and see the planes, I am happy," Travolta told The Associated Press last year.

His eldest son, Jett, and daughter, Ella, played happily around the mid-century compound.

"We've got a big pool, a slide and a golf course," Preston told Architectural Digest. "We're a family who likes to play a lot."

And although that family traveled often for work—Travolta's latest movie, "Bolt," in which he does the voice for an animated dog, was just released—they also spent time in Ocala and the even smaller village of Anthony, which is right down the street from their home.

"I love rubbing elbows with life and real people," Travolta, 54, once told the local newspaper, the Star-Banner. "I don't like living in ivory towers. I want to enjoy life the way everybody else does."

"He's just, I don't know, a normal person," said Barbara Pound, a waitress at the Saddle Rack Cafe. She served him his favorite breakfast—a $6.49 western omelet—on a handful of occasions. "Nobody bothers him here. We let him have his peace."

Travolta once brought his son into the cafe and the boy "wouldn't stop smiling," said manager Jackie Gomillion.

Others have spotted Travolta and his family cruising around in his classic Thunderbird or just shopping at the Gap in the local mall. Twice, Travolta hosted charity fundraisers around movie premieres at the local movie theater in Ocala where thousands of local fans showed up.

Brent Johnson of Ocala once saw him at the gym at 5:30 a.m.

"I thought to myself, I'm not going to harass him, but he came up to me and said, 'Hey, how are you doing?'" Johnson said. "He asked about my kids and family. I think there's a sense of pride here in Ocala that someone like that would want to live here."

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Bedtime Stories

Thurs thru Sat	1:20	4:05	7:25	9:45
Sunday	1:20	4:05	7:25	
Mon thru Wed		4:05	7:25	

Adam Sandler, Keri Russell
Comedy, Adventure • Rated PG 13

Synopsis
Hotel handyman Skeeter Bronson's life is changed forever when the bedtime stories he tells his niece and nephew start to mysteriously come true. When he tries to help his family by telling one outlandish tale after another, it's the kids' unexpected contributions that turn all of their lives upside down.

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button

Thurs thru Sat	1:00	4:00	7:00	10:00
Sunday	1:00	4:00	7:00	
Mon thru Wed		4:00	7:00	

Brad Pitt, Cate Blanchett
Drama, Romance • Rated PG 13

Synopsis
Benjamin Button is a man who is born in his eighties and ages backwards: a man, like any of us, who is unable to stop time. From New Orleans at the end of World War I in 1918, into the 21st century, on a journey as unusual as any man's life can be, this is the grand tale of a not so ordinary man and the people and places he discovers along the way, the loves he finds and loses, the joys of life and the sadness of death, and what lasts beyond time.

Marley and Me

Thurs thru Sat	1:25	4:30	7:15	9:55
Sunday	1:25	4:30	7:15	
Mon thru Wed		4:30	7:15	

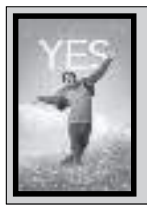
Owen Wilson, Jennifer Aniston
Comedy, Drama • Rated PG 13

Valkyrie

Thurs thru Sat	1:30	4:25	7:20	9:50
Sunday	1:30	4:25	7:20	
Mon thru Wed		4:25	7:20	

Tom Cruise, Bill Nighy
Thriller, War, Historical • Rated PG 13

★ ★ ★



Yes Man

Thurs thru Sat	1:05	4:20	7:05	9:35
Sunday	1:05	4:20	7:05	
Mon thru Wed		4:20	7:05	

Jim Carrey, Bradley Cooper
Comedy • Rated PG 13

Synopsis
Carl Allen's life is going nowhere—the operative word being "no"—until he signs up for a self-help program based on one simple covenant: say yes to everything—and anything. Unleashing the power of "YES" begins to transform Carl's life in amazing an unexpected ways, getting him promoted at work and opening the door to a new romance.

The Tale of Despereaux

Thurs thru Sat	1:10	4:15	7:30	9:30
Sunday	1:10	4:15	7:30	
Mon thru Wed		4:15	7:30	

Sigourney Weaver, Dustin Hoffman
Animated, Chicldren • Rated G

Seven Pounds

Thurs thru Sat	1:15	4:10	7:10	9:40
Sunday	1:15	4:10	7:10	
Mon thru Wed		4:10	7:10	

Will Smith, Rosario Dawson
Drama, Romance • Rated PG 13

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Lisa Marie Presley defends Scientology

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Lisa Marie Presley is expressing her condolences over Jett Travolta's death and defending Scientology, the religion that Presley, John Travolta and Kelly Preston follow.

Presley's MySpace blog on Tuesday read: "I am writing this because I have noticed that for the most part, people and the media have been very sympathetic and respectful, but there are those certain ones that want to use this horrible tragedy as an opportunity to once again, blame and-or attack Scientology."

Elvis Presley's daughter also writes that it's untrue that Scientologists do not believe in medical care and insisted if "a medication will make it better then they take it."

Presley

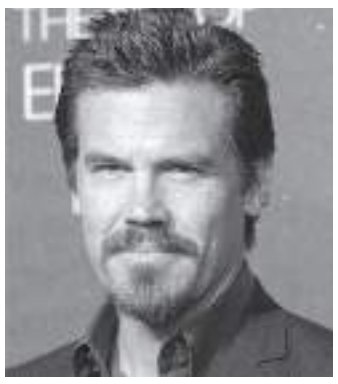
Anna Nicole Smith judge cleared of wrongdoing

MIAMI (AP)—Authorities say the former judge who presided in the dispute over Anna Nicole Smith's remains has been cleared of any wrongdoing.

The Miami-Dade state attorney's office announced the results of its investigation Tuesday.

Broward County Judge Larry Seidlin, who left the bench in 2007, is best known for his emotional displays while presiding over the debate on where to bury model Anna Nicole Smith's body that year.

Last year, a complaint was received from a lawyer who said Seidlin had solicited gifts from another attorney who represented clients in his court.



AP

In this Dec. 15, 2008 file photo, Josh Brolin arrives at the opening of the Dolce & Gabbana flagship boutique in Los Angeles.

Attorney: Charge against Josh Brolin to be dropped

LOS ANGELES (AP)—It's not exactly a presidential pardon, but prosecutors have agreed to drop charges filed against "W." actors Josh Brolin and Jeffrey Wright after an incident a Louisiana bar last year.

Brolin, Wright and five crew members of the Oliver Stone film "W." were arrested on misdemeanor charges at the Stray Cat Club on July 12. Brolin and Wright were charged with interfering with police officers after a disturbance involving a crew member.

Los Angeles attorney Blair Berk, who represented the actors and five others, said prosecutors in Shreveport have agreed to drop all charges against the group within 60 days. She declined to comment further.

A prosecutor didn't return a phone message seeking comment Tuesday.

Video posted on the celebrity gossip site TMZ showed Brolin and Wright hugging each other before being placed in handcuffs. Brolin rubs his eyes after apparently being pepper sprayed. He then kneels on a sidewalk as other officers forcibly cuff Wright, who is lying in the street nearby.

Brolin, who played President George W. Bush in Stone's film, wasn't required to attend a court hearing scheduled for Tuesday. Wright portrayed former Secretary of State Colin Powell.

Garner, Affleck welcome 2nd daughter

In this Feb. 9, 2003 file photo, actress Jennifer Garner, left, and actor Ben Affleck pose in Los Angeles.

AP

LOS ANGELES (AP)—It's another girl for Jennifer Garner and Ben Affleck.

Affleck's spokesman, Shawn Sachs, and Garner's spokeswoman, Leslie Sloane-Zelnik, said Tuesday that Garner gave birth to their second daughter but would not provide any additional details.

Garner and Affleck, both 36, were married in June 2005. Garner gave birth to daughter Violet in December 2005.

Affleck co-starred with Garner in "Daredevil," and they began dating in 2004.

Actress Alyssa Milano to wed Hollywood agent

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Who's the fiance?

Alyssa Milano is engaged to marry a Hollywood agent.

Publicists for Milano said Tuesday that the actress accepted a marriage proposal on Dec. 18 from David Bugliari, an agent at Creative Artists Agency. The two have been dating for over a year. No wedding date has been set.

The 36-year-old "Who's the Boss?" star most recently has appeared in a recurring role on "My Name is Earl." Her other TV credits include "Charmed" and "Melrose Place."

In this Feb. 3, 2007 file photo, Alyssa Milano arrives at the Playboy Super Bowl XLI party in Miami.

AP

Swayze faces cancer (and a new TV series) bravely

AP

In this image released by ABC, Barbara Walters, right, poses with actor Patrick Swayze at his California ranch on Dec. 6, 2008.

NEW YORK (AP)—Patrick Swayze says his yearlong battle with pancreatic cancer put him "through hell" while he pushed ahead on his new TV series. "I've never been one to run from a challenge," Swayze tells ABC's Barbara Walters in an exclusive interview.

But the 56-year-old actor owns up to his fear: "Yeah, I'm scared. Yeah, I'm angry. Yeah, I'm (asking), 'Why me?'"

Swayze's new A&E police drama, "The Beast," which premieres next week, meant grueling 12-hour workdays, with chemotherapy sessions on the weekends. He rejected painkilling drugs that would have taken the edge off his performance. In five months, he missed just a day and a half at work.

"You can bet that I'm going through hell," Swayze says. "And I've only seen the beginning of it."

Most patients with advanced-stage pancreatic cancer face grim odds, and Swayze acknowledges that time may be running out.

"I'd say five years is pretty wishful thinking. Two years seems likely if you're going to believe statistics. I want to last until they find a cure, which means I'd better get a fire under it."

Couple tosses and turns over sharing the covers

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
FROM UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby

DEAR ABBY: My boyfriend and I have a wonderful relationship, but there is one big problem. I don't like to share blankets at bedtime. The truth is, I like to sleep comfortably with my blankets tucked all around. I have honestly tried sharing, but I can't sleep that way or even get comfortable. My boyfriend thinks I'm weird and that I don't like being close to him at night. Isn't sharing a bed enough?

CREATURE OF HABIT

DEAR CREATURE: In my opinion it is, but because your boyfriend doesn't agree with you, you DO have a problem. Getting enough sleep is important for maintaining one's health, and studies show that people aren't getting enough of it these days. Try explaining this to him, along with the fact that intimacy is what happens BEFORE you hit the sheets.

However, if he still doesn't get it, then he will have to decide whether your virtues outweigh your "idiosyncrasy." (Believe me, I've heard worse.)

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: My darling husband, "Darren," and I are soul mates, yet he has asked me for a divorce. He says it's not because he doesn't love me, but because he does.

Abby, we may be facing bankruptcy. Darren doesn't want to drag me and my credit down. He doesn't want to leave, and thinks that after we divorce our life can go on as it has been—although on paper we'll no longer be husband and wife.

My first thought was, No! We are husband and wife. I MEANT "for richer or poorer." We're in our 50s, and Darren says he is looking out for my future.

I am committed to my marriage and believe we're in this financial situation together. I didn't marry Darren for his money, and I certainly don't want to divorce him over money.

Darren swears this isn't an excuse to get out of our marriage. He says we can be married again as soon as we're back on our feet. Am I wrong about this, Abby? Should I "suspend" our marriage? It's breaking my heart to even consider it.

IN TEARS IN TUCSON

DEAR IN TEARS: Dry your tears and make an appointment for you and Darren to consult your CPA. Your husband is either misguided, or he MAY be making an excuse to get out of the marriage.

Because the bills were run up during your marriage, divorce may not relieve you from liability. Of course, laws vary from state to state, however, it may be possible for your husband to file bankruptcy on his own. Furthermore, there needs to be a reason for divorce, and there are penalties for making false statements. So I don't recommend it.

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: I am being married this year and have an etiquette question. A close family member was recently arrested and will be in jail at the time my wedding takes place. Because of our close relationship, I would like to invite him, but I'm worried that to do so would be considered more offensive than not inviting him, as he will obviously not be able to attend. What do you think?

TRYING TO BE KIND IN SAN FRANCISCO

DEAR TRYING TO BE KIND: Because of the circumstances, write your family member a letter telling him that you are being married, that you love him, and you will be thinking of him on your wedding day. My feeling is sending a formal invitation would make him feel even more isolated and left out than he already does.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

To receive a collection of Abby's most memorable—and most frequently requested—poems and essays, send a business-sized, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for $6 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby—Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included in the price.)

Pastimes

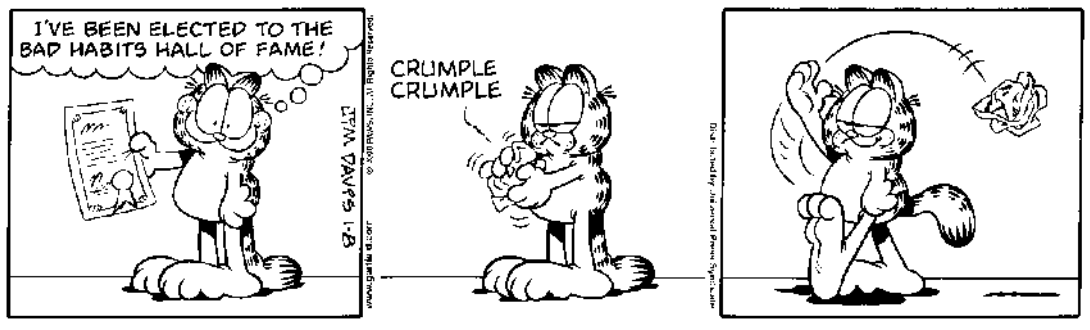
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE BEST WAY TO GET WHAT YOU WANT? IS IT BETTER TO HOLD FAST AND NEVER BACK DOWN, OR TO COMPROMISE?
I SUPPOSE IT'S BEST TO HOLD FAST WHEN YOU CAN, AND COMPROMISE WHEN YOU NEED TO.
THAT'S A LOT MORE MATURE THAN I THINK I CARE TO BE.

Garfield®

By Jim Davis



Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

COMPUTER, COMPUTER THAT I SEE, WHO'S THE FAIREST AMONGST THEE?
YOU. PALE EARS.
IT'S WINTER AND YOU WORK LONG HOURS. YOU REALLY NEED TO MAKE A POINT OF GETTING OUTSIDE MORE.

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

I PULLED YOU OVER BECAUSE YOU WERE DRIVING SUSPICIOUSLY.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?! I WAS DRIVING FIVE MILES BELOW THE LIMIT, WEARING MY SEAT BELT AND CHECKING ALL MY MIRRORS!
EXACTLY.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

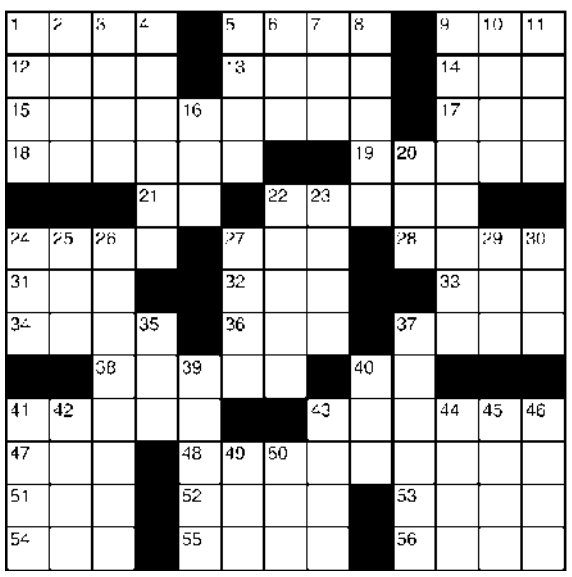
ACROSS
1 Heche or Hathaway
5 Kine
9 Aries
12 "Groovy"
13 "Hi, sailor!"
14 First lady?
15 "Becker" star
17 Part of DJIA
18 Record container
19 Go on all fours
21 Concerning
22 Plant louse
24 Nose lengtheners?
27 Snake eyes
28 Lummoxes
31 Antiquated
32 Toward the stern
33 Savings acronym
34 Puff
36 Greek consonants
37 Let fall
38 Dynamite inventor
40 Author Milne
41 Dictation taker
43 Not quite
47 Spoonbender Geller
48 "Deliverance" actor
51 Puppeteer Baird
52 Canal zone
53 Dance lesson
54 Fa-la link
55 Hourglass fill
56 Japanese zither

DOWN
1 Gospels' follow-up
2 Yuletide refrain
3 Protuberance
4 Respectable people?
5 Chaplin prop
6 Surprise cries
7 Court
8 Simultaneity
9 Famed oilfield firefighter
10 Acknowledge
11 Kitten's remark
16 Rd.
20 "Flying Down to —"
22 Terrible
23 Cookware
24 High-arc shot
25 Under the weather
26 Al Bundy's portrayer
27 Domesticate
29 To and
30 Tree fluid
35 Took the prize
37 Grayish red
39 Skeleton components
40 Milwaukee product
41 Long lunches
42 Small combo
43 Sleeping
44 Sgt. Snorkel's dog
45 Undo a dele
46 Glitch in print
49 Historic time
50 Cacophony

Solution time: 25 mins.

A	P	S	E	■	M	A	P	■	A	C	M	E
C	O	F	D	■	F	W	F	■	G	O	O	P
H	O	I	W	A	I	E	R	■	A	L	'	O
E	I	A	I	N	F	■	F	I	'	D	F	S
■	■	■	N	O	R	■	Z	■	N	C	■	■
A	S	H	■	N	F	T	■	P	S	A	I	M
B	O	O	T	■	D	I	P	■	T	S	A	R
E	N	T	R	Y	■	P	I	C	■	E	M	S
■	■	S	U	E	D	■	M	O	D	■	■	■
O	C	T	A	N	E	■	P	L	A	S	M	S
S	H	U	N	■	C	O	L	D	F	F	E	T
L	E	F	T	■	A	D	E	■	F	R	A	Y
O	F	F	S	■	Y	E	S	■	Y	A	L	E

Yesterday's answer 1-8



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955!** 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18 or y.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Jenny Lewis, 33; Ami Dolenz, 40; R. Kelly, 42; David Bowie, 62

Happy Birthday: You can engage in many different projects this year but be sure to protect your heart. You have everything going for you but, when it comes to your personal life, there will be plenty of choices to make. Focus on the present and the future, not the past. Stand tall and be successful. Your numbers are 6, 9, 11, 24, 28, 31, 40

ARIES (*March 21-April 19*): Take the initiative and show everyone what you have to offer. You can make it on your own, so stop waiting for others to make a move. Once you start moving in a direction that suits you, nothing will be able to slow you down. ✪✪✪✪

TAURUS (*April 20-May 20*): Concentrate on getting ahead and do not leave room for error. Love is looking positive and pursuing something with that special person that could be prosperous, will bring you closer together. Follow your dreams. ✪✪✪

GEMINI (*May 21-June 20*): Set your sights high and do not deviate from them even if someone you are impressed with tries to sway you. You must be true to your goals if you want to be successful. Don't let anything deter you from getting what you want. ✪✪✪

CANCER (*June 21-July 22*): Pour your heart out if it will help you solve a pending problem. A change of heart or partnership will do you good. A passionate encounter is in the stars and a serious commitment can be made. ✪✪✪

LEO (*July 23-Aug. 22*): Someone from your past is likely to surprise you. Expect the unexpected but don't fall for the same trick twice. Do a little research in order to realize what you should do next. Talk to your boss or a colleague about your goals. ✪✪✪✪

VIRGO (*Aug. 23-Sept. 22*): You have to stop being so hard and critical and start to enjoy your time with friends and colleagues. Having a common bond or interest can work to your advantage. Firm up on work-related friendships and prosper. ✪✪

LIBRA (*Sept. 23-Oct. 22*): Be open, honest and fair. A trip or chance to experience a different culture or lifestyle will inspire you to make some adjustments to your own everyday routine. Share your thoughts with people from different backgrounds. ✪✪✪✪✪

SCORPIO (*Oct. 23-Nov. 21*): Wasting time trying to do what's impossible will leave you frustrated and stagnant. Love and romance are in the stars, so put time aside to nurture your most important relationships. A strong home base will help you get ahead in all facets of life. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): The future looks bright if you are willing to forego the past and focus on the possibilities that face you. Think big but don't overdo without having the funds to cover your costs. Emotions may cause an impulsive action. ✪✪✪

CAPRICORN (*Dec. 22-Jan. 19*): Your dedication will bring you the success you desire and your ability to shuffle and adapt to whatever you face will ensure you are heading in the right direction and are unstoppable. Give your all and that's what you'll get in return. ✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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AQUARIUS (*Jan. 20-Feb. 18*): You can benefit from working from home or developing a means to make extra cash. Check out your options and let your imagination lead to an interesting way to market something you have to offer. ✪✪✪✪✪

PISCES (*Feb. 19-March 20*): Don't give in to emotional blackmail. Be true to yourself if you don't want to end up being taken advantage of. Question your motives as well as the motives of the people you are involved with. ✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are a leader and an imaginative individual who can always find solutions. You are a free thinker, a passionate lover and a loyal and dedicated friend.

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SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

2								9
		3	8		4	1		
		8				2		
		4	2		6	3		
			4	1	5			
		9	7		8	6		
		2				9		
		7	3		9	8		
8								4

Difficulty Level ★★★ 1/08

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's SUDOKU Answer

1	7	6	3	2	4	8	9	5
5	8	4	1	9	6	2	7	3
3	2	9	7	8	5	6	1	4
4	9	2	6	3	8	7	5	1
6	1	5	9	7	2	4	3	8
8	3	7	5	4	1	9	6	2
2	5	3	8	6	7	1	4	9
9	6	8	4	1	3	5	2	7
7	4	1	2	5	9	3	8	6

Difficulty Level ★★★

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD. The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

HAYWARD, CALIFORNIA Solution: 9 letters

C	E	C	Y	O	A	K	L	A	N	D	R	A	W	O
H	O	N	A	E	A	D	E	M	A	L	A	N	I	S
A	I	S	O	R	N	S	L	W	O	O	E	R	N	G
B	U	H	T	L	N	E	A	L	E	D	L	O	T	A
O	A	M	C	A	H	A	E	R	E	E	I	D	H	L
I	A	A	L	U	N	O	I	W	D	S	K	A	E	F
T	N	I	R	A	G	O	H	I	S	E	S	S	A	N
I	E	L	N	E	N	A	A	I	O	L	N	U	E	K
R	I	L	I	A	L	C	M	N	B	N	L	O	R	S
R	D	I	M	L	E	P	W	A	A	T	R	I	E	I
E	D	W	I	N	N	A	P	E	Y	T	U	A	H	L
M	E	D	T	B	A	R	T	A	S	Q	S	D	W	I
N	A	R	Z	L	A	K	E	A	I	T	A	I	E	C
Y	A	R	E	F	A	H	C	S	D	S	N	N	I	O
L	A	I	R	O	M	E	M	Y	E	L	L	A	V	N

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Alameda, Amtrak, Apple, Arden, Bart, Bayside, Carnation, Castro, Cea, Central, Chabot, Costanoan, Del Rio, East, Eddie, Eden, Fault, Flags, Garin, Halliday, Hills, Iris, Lake, Memorial, Merrill, Mission, Newman, Nimitz, Oakland, Online, Olden, Park, Quirk, Russe , Schafer, Silicon, Sweeney, Tahoe, Valley, View, Ware, Weekses, West, Wiam, Yamaguchi

Yesterday's Answer: Arch

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NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION, : CIVIL ACTION NO. 08-0008

Plaintiff,

-v-

The Estate of FRANCISCO SEMAN IBA, Deceased, and MARGARITA BORJA IBA

Defendants.

NOTICE OF SALE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that, pursuant to an Order issued by the Court in this matter on December 4, 2008, I will sell, at public auction, to the highest bidder, on the terms and conditions set forth hereinbelow, all of the right, title, and interest of Defendant in and to the following property: Lot No. 021 T 48, situated in San Jose Village, Tinian, Northern Mariana Islands, containing an area of 867 square meters, more or less, as shown on Cadstral Plat No. 021 T 02, the original of which was registered with the Commonwealth Recorder as File No. 84-1597 on August 15, 1984, the description therein being incorporated herein by reference.

Date, Time, and Place of Sale. The sale will be held on Friday, January 16, 2009, at the hour of 11:30 a.m., at the Courthouse in Tinian, Northern Mariana Islands. The sale will be open to the general public.

Terms and Conditions of Sale. The Terms and Conditions of Sale may be obtained from the undersigned, either prior to or at the sale. These terms and conditions shall govern the conduct of the sale.

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ADVERTISING DEADLINE

Classified Ads

Ads must be submitted before 12 noon 2 days prior to publication date

Saturday Issue:
- *Saipan Tribune:* All ads placed Friday before 12 noon will come out Saturday issue and anything placed thereafter will be published on Monday issue.

CANCELLATION

Classified Ads

Cancellations should be made before 12 noon of the day prior to date of publication.

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Refunds will only be made if cancellation deadlines are met. No refunds will be made once ad is already printed.

CHECK YOUR ADS

Saipan Tribune will not be responsible for errors after the first day of publication. Errors should be called in before noon of the issue date. *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to place ads under proper headings and to revise copy when necessary.

ADVERTISING POLICY

All advertising in the *Saipan Tribune* are subject to applicable rate sheet, copies of which are available from the Advertising Sales Department (please call 235-8747, 235-2769 or 235-6397). All ads will be subject to approval prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit, refuse, reject or cancel any ad at any time. Also, *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to place ads under proper headings and to revise copy when necessary.

Bobcats send reeling Celtics to another loss

CHARLOTTE, North Carolina (AP)—The Charlotte Bobcats stunned Boston 114-106 in overtime to continue the Celtics' sudden slide in the NBA on Tuesday.

Beaten by their surprising nemesis for the second time in two seasons, the defending champions have quickly gone from unbeatable to vulnerable. After a team-record 19-game winning streak and an NBA-record 27-2 start, the Celtics lost for the fifth time in seven games, leaving battered, bruised and angry by coach Larry Brown's upstart Bobcats.

Paul Pierce scored 28 points, but had a key turnover in overtime. Ray Allen scored 20 points on 7-of-20 shooting for the Celtics.

Raymond Felton scored 25 points and rookie D.J. Augustin added 11 of his 20 points in overtime for Charlotte.

AP

Charlotte Bobcats guard D.J. Augustin (14) passes the ball around Boston Celtics guard Paul Pierce (34) during the first half of the Bobcats' 114-106 overtime win in an NBA basketball game in Charlotte, N.C., Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2009.

Hornets 116, Lakers 105

At Los Angeles, David West scored 15 of his 40 points in the fourth quarter, and Chris Paul added 32 points and 15 assists as New Orleans snapped the Los Angeles Lakers' 15-game home winning streak.

West shot 14-of-23 from the floor and 12-of-13 from the foul line in matching his career high. He also grabbed 11 rebounds as the Hornets (21-10) won for the 16th time in 21 games and avenged two losses to the Lakers in New Orleans earlier this season.

Kobe Bryant led the Lakers with 39 points and seven assists, but scored only two in the fourth quarter.

Magic 89, Wizards 80

At Orlando, Florida, Hedo Turkoglu scored 22 points and Orlando held off a late scoring burst by Caron Butler to beat Washington.

Orlando center Dwight Howard had his league-leading 25th double-double, with 15 points and 16 rebounds. Jameer Nelson added 14 points for the Magic, who rebounded from their loss at Toronto on Sunday.

Butler had 29 points, all in the second half, and Antawn Jamison scored 13 for the recently energized Wizards, who fell to 0-3 against Orlando this season.

76ers 104, Rockets 96

At Philadelphia, Andre Iguodala scored 28 points and reeling Philadelphia returned home from a dreadful road trip to beat Houston.

The Sixers needed to escape the Lone Star State to finally defeat a team from Texas. They lost at Dallas and San Antonio in the final two games of a 1-5 road trip and had lost five of seven overall, parking them in last place in the Atlantic Division.

Heading home was the perfect tonic. Iguodala continued on his recent scoring surge and scored nine points in the third quarter to help the Sixers stretch the lead to 11.

Luis Scola led six Rockets in double figures with 18 points and grabbed 17 rebounds.

Timberwolves 94, Grizzlies 87

At Memphis, Tennessee, Randy Foye scored 23 points, including the go-ahead 3-pointer with 40 seconds left, as Minnesota weathered a late rally to beat Memphis.

Following his basket, Foye blocked O.J. Mayo's shot on the next Grizzlies possession, leading to a fast-break bucket by Ryan Gomes, and the Timberwolves secured their third straight win—their longest winning streak since January 2007.

Al Jefferson added 19 points, 12 rebounds and four blocks for Minnesota, which scored the final seven points, five by Foye.

Hakim Warrick scored 22 points and Mayo added 20 points, eight rebounds and five assists for Memphis.

Thunder 107, Knicks 99

At Oklahoma City, Kevin Durant had 27 points and 12 rebounds and Jeff Green scored 27 points as Oklahoma City held off New York.

The Thunder (5-30) continued their recent offensive surge, shooting 52.7 percent from the field—including an 11-for-16 performance by Durant. Still, they nearly blew a 23-point second-half lead before recovering.

Al Harrington scored 21 points and Chris Duhon added 18 for the Knicks (13-20), who were coming off a victory over defending NBA champion Boston. New York, which beat the Thunder by 10 points on Nov. 14, shot 39.8 percent.

Russell Westbrook added 22 points and nine assists for Oklahoma City.

Bulls 99, Kings 94

At Chicago, Ben Gordon scored 24 points and Chicago beat Sacramento to snap a three-game losing streak.

The Bulls converted 33 of 36 free throws, but the three they missed nearly cost them. After making its first 29, Chicago hit just four of its final seven, allowing Sacramento to stay in the game.

Trailing 97-94 after Chicago's Drew Gooden hit 1-of-2 with 9.1 seconds left, Sacramento had a chance to tie it. But Kevin Martin missed a finger roll with 4 seconds left and Thabo Sefolosha hit two more free throws to seal it for the Bulls.

Kevin Martin had 29 points for the lowly Kings, who have dropped 10 of 11.

Mavericks 107, Clippers 102

At Dallas, Dirk Nowitzki scored 34 points, including the go-ahead jumper with 37 seconds left right after he blocked a shot as Dallas held on to beat the short-handed Los Angeles Clippers.

The Mavericks needed a game-ending 11-1 run to avoid being upset at home by Los Angeles, which had only eight players in uniform because of injuries and a suspension.

Rookie guard Eric Gordon led the Clippers with 32 points, but he was blocked driving for a layup with 48 seconds left by Nowitzki, who then hit a high-arching 11-footer at the other end for a 103-102 lead.

Nuggets' Anthony out 3 weeks with broken bone

DENVER (AP)—Carmelo Anthony didn't care for the color of the new removable splint he was sporting on his broken right hand, preferring it to be Denver Nuggets blue over bright red.

Then again, a splint of any color sure beats surgery.

The Nuggets All-Star guard will miss at least three weeks after breaking a bone in his shooting hand in a victory over the Indiana Pacers on Monday night.

He's been told by doctors he'll be out three to four weeks. Surgery would've sidelined him much longer.

"Hopefully the healing process will be a lot quicker," Anthony said after returning to the Pepsi Center following his visit with a hand specialist.

Anthony attempted to put a positive slant on his predicament.

"I can get my left hand better," he cracked, hoping to become even more dangerous on offense.

The recovery time for his hand also will help his bruised right elbow, which caused him to miss three games in late December.

"I'm going to make this time the best time I can, just by rehabbing," Anthony said. "I'm surprised, a little bit frustrated I've got to sit out."

Anthony was injured with 9:44 left in the third quarter when Pacers center Jeff Foster swatted at the ball, catching part of Anthony's hand.

He continued to play despite numbness in the hand, scoring 21 points before leaving late in the fourth quarter of a 135-115 win.

"Tough kid," teammate Kenyon Martin said.

Anthony's glad he didn't know the hand was broken. He didn't want to come out, not with the game still close.

"We just needed that game," said Anthony, whose team blew a 20-point lead before pulling away again in the fourth quarter. "That was a game last night that we couldn't let slip out of our hands."

Anthony's hand hurt so much that he asked teammate J.R. Smith to hike up an elbow sleeve on his right arm, drawing a bewildered look from Smith.

"He's like, 'Man, you're really messed up,'" said Anthony, who tied an NBA record for points in a quarter (33) against Minnesota on Dec. 10. "My elbow was hurting, my hand was hurting, I really couldn't do nothing."

Anthony's injury comes with the Nuggets on a four-game winning streak. At 24-12, Denver is off to its best start since its first year in the NBA in 1976-77.

The Nuggets play seven of their next eight games at home, starting with the Miami Heat on Wednesday night.

"If an injury is coming at a good place, it might be in a good place now," Nuggets coach George Karl said. "We can feel sorry on off days, but we can't feel sorry for ourselves when the games start. We've got to figure out how to win games."

BC's Jagodzinski meets with New York Jets

BOSTON (AP)—Boston College's Jeff Jagodzinski met with New York Jets officials Tuesday to discuss their head coaching vacancy—an interview that was expected to cost him his job with the Eagles.

Jagodzinski, who became BC's coach in 2007, was told by athletic director Gene DeFilippo that he would be fired if he met with the NFL team.

"It's just a matter of putting two and two together," Chris Cameron, BC's associate director for media relations, said Tuesday night. "He was told by Gene on Saturday that if he went on the interview he'd be fired."

ESPN.com, citing two people close to the situation, reported Tuesday night that Jagodzinski will not be retained by BC because of the meeting with New York.

DeFilippo said late Tuesday afternoon that he was hoping to meet with Jagodzinski on Wednesday before taking action but wouldn't say whether the coach would be fired.

DeFilippo left a phone message for Jagodzinski on Tuesday but had not heard back by early evening, Cameron said.

"I'm sure he'll get back to me," DeFilippo said. "He always does."

Jagodzinski, who has three years left on his five-year contract, upset DeFilippo when he didn't tell his boss that he would interview with the Jets, who fired Eric Mangini the day after the team failed to make the playoffs despite an 8-3 start.

Jagodzinski, 45, was Jets quarterback Brett Favre's offensive coordinator in Green Bay in 2006 but is considered a long shot for the New York job. The Jets declined comment through a team spokesman, neither confirming nor denying that Jagodzinski was interviewing for the coaching vacancy.

The Jets have interviewed several candidates and planned to talk with Arizona offensive line coach Russ Grimm.

The BC position has responsibilities far beyond the football field—meeting with alumni and supporters of the program, attending functions and participating in other off-field events.

An NFL coaching job has very little of that, and openings other than New York's could be attractive.

Jagodzinski spent two years as BC's offensive coordinator, starting in 1997 when Matt Hasselbeck was the quarterback. Hasselbeck is now with Seattle, which must put together a staff under new coach Jim Mora. Jagodzinski was an assistant under Mora in Atlanta before spending one season at Green Bay.

If Jagodzinski leaves, current assistants Frank Spaziani and Jack Bicknell Jr. loom as possible replacements. Spaziani has been a BC assistant for 12 years, the last 10 as defensive coordinator. Bicknell is the assistant head coach and son of former BC coach Jack Bicknell.

"I want a coach who wants to be at BC for a long time," DeFilippo said Monday.

Sitting in his office late Tuesday afternoon, a relaxed DeFilippo said he last spoke with Jagodzinski on Sunday.

"Sometimes two people who really, really like each other can disagree on an issue. That's OK. Nothing wrong with that," DeFilippo said. "I really like Jags a lot and I've enjoyed working with him here for two years and he did a wonderful job here.

"So we're going to sit down, hopefully, and talk and we'll see where we come out."

Jagodzinski took the BC job in 2007 after Tom O'Brien left for North Carolina State. He led the Eagles to the Atlantic Coast Conference title game in his two seasons, losing both times to Virginia Tech.

Tulsa rolls over Ball State in wet GMAC Bowl

MOBILE, Ala. (AP)—Tulsa raced through the rain to another GMAC Bowl win and a couple more records, too.

Tarrion Adams rushed for 207 yards and three touchdowns in the 45-13 victory over No. 23 Ball State on a soggy Tuesday night. The Golden Hurricane (11-3) finished with a school-record 11 victories.

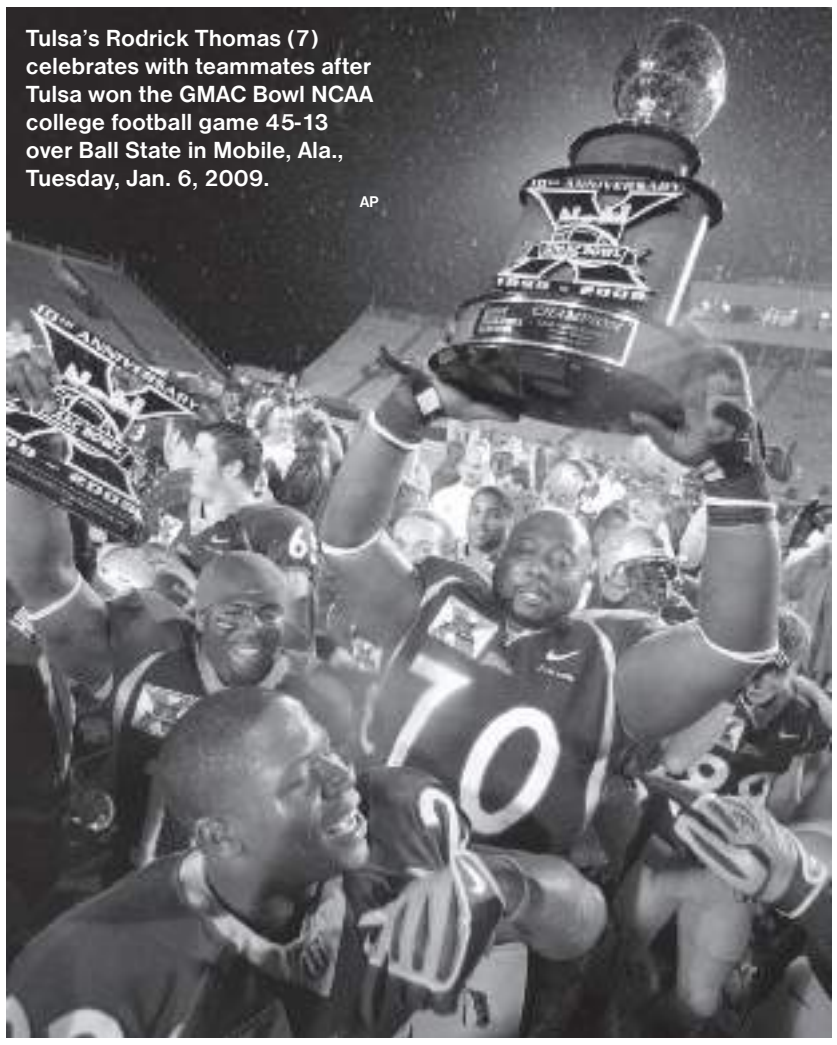
Adams passed Micheal Gunter to become Tulsa's career rushing leader. Tulsa had 439 yards rushing and 632 overall—hardly slowing down a bit by rain that first formed puddles and then covered nearly the entire field during a second-half deluge.

David Johnson passed for 193 yards and three touchdowns, most of that to freshman Damaris Johnson. Tulsa kicker Jarod Tracy became the school's career scoring leader.

Tulsa's 63-7 win over Bowling Green in last year's GMAC was the most lopsided bowl game in NCAA history. This was another runaway thanks to the nation's No. 2 offense and a capitalistic defense.

Ball State (12-2) fell to 0-5 in bowl games after recording a school-record 12 wins.

Damaris Johnson supplied many of the big plays for Tulsa's no-huddle offense and had 274 all-purpose yards. He had 135 yards receiving, 76 yards rushing—including a tackle-breaking 62-yarder in the fourth quarter—and returned three kicks for 63 yards.



Tulsa's Rodrick Thomas (7) celebrates with teammates after Tulsa won the GMAC Bowl NCAA college football game 45-13 over Ball State in Mobile, Ala., Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2009. AP

Adams needed just 19 carries, though one was a season-long 56-yard touchdown scamper. Three of his teammates ran for at least 58 yards as well.

The Cardinals had been giving up just 142 yards a game on the ground and 348 total.

It was a rough debut for Ball State coach Stan Parrish, a 62-year-old promoted from offensive coordinator on Dec. 18 after Brady Hoke left to take over the San Diego State program.

Most of the second half was played in a driving rain, making a comeback attempt by quarterback Nate Davis and Ball State even more difficult.

It might have been the final college game for Davis, who has indicated he was considering skipping his senior season to enter the NFL draft. He was 9-of-29 passing for 145 yards and lost two fumbles and an interception in the first half.

With that help, Tulsa built a 24-13 halftime lead, with all three touchdowns on plays of at least 30 yards. Ball State hadn't been down going into the locker room this season.

Tulsa marched 87 yards on the opening drive of the second half, capping it with David Johnson's 15-yard touchdown pass to Slick Shelley. Ball State couldn't come close to answering, going three-and-out on all three possessions of the third quarter.

Leading rusher MiQuale Lewis, who gained over 1,700 yards this season, was limited to 35 on 16 carries.

The Cardinals lost their final two games after setting a school mark with 12 wins in a perfect regular season. They earned the first national ranking in program history this season.

Davis lost fumbles on Ball State's first two drives, with the first setting up David Johnson's 30-yard touchdown pass to Damaris Johnson across the middle.

Davis redeemed himself with a 17-yard touchdown run to tie it up late in the first quarter.

Then Ball State's Kyle Young blocked a punt at Tulsa's 22-yard line. Three incompletions later, Ball State had to settle for Ian McGarvey's 39-yard field goal and a 17-10 deficit.

Adams added his 56-yarder before Davis nearly got the Cardinals back within a score, thanks to a bulldozing, spinning run down to the Tulsa 7 in the final minute. Tulsa stood again, forcing a field goal and Ball State didn't challenge again.

Romero, Mitre suspended 50 games each

NEW YORK (AP)—Phillies reliever J.C. Romero was suspended for the first 50 games of next season on Tuesday after testing positive for a banned substance contained in a supplement developed by convicted BALCO chemist Patrick Arnold.

Yankees minor league pitcher Sergio Mitre also was suspended for the first 50 games of next season after testing positive for a banned substance in an over-the-counter supplement.

The suspensions, upheld by arbitrator Stephen Goldberg, triggered an angry response from the Major League Baseball Players Association.

"We strongly disagree with the commissioner's discipline and with the arbitrator's decision," Michael Weiner, the union's general counsel, said in a statement. "Mitre and Romero both legally purchased nutritional supplements from national chain stores in the United States. Nothing on the labels of those supplements indicated that they contained a trace amount of a substance prohibited under Major League Baseball's Joint Drug Prevention and Treatment Program."

Rob Manfred, executive vice president of labor relations in the commissioner's office, said the players were at fault.

"Certainly Major League Baseball along with the players' association has consistently told players there's risk associated with nutritional substances purchased over the counter," Manfred said.

Manfred said the players failed to use supplements that had been approved under a certification program the sport began in 2006, and that Phillies strength and conditioning coordinator Dong Lien had warned Romero not to use the supplement. Posters in each major league clubhouse give players a hot line to call to check on substances, and Manfred said Romero did not use the hot line.

Weiner saw it differently.

"Their unknowing actions plainly are distinguishable from those of a person who intentionally used an illegal performance-enhancing substance," he said.

Romero, who earned two wins in Philadelphia's World Series victory over Tampa Bay last season, used 6-OXO, developed by Ergopharm, which is led by Arnold. The company's Web site touts it as "the new gold standard for testosterone elevation."

Arnold pleaded guilty in 2006 to one count of conspiracy to distribute steroids as part of the federal prosecution of the Bay Area Laboratory-Cooperative. Arnold, who created the previously undetectable steroid "the clear," was sentenced to three months in prison and three months' home confinement

Mitre tested positive for Halodrol.

Both supplements contain Androstenetrione as a listed ingredient and apparently were contaminated with Androstenedione, the substance Mark McGwire used in the 1990s. While Androstenedione was banned by baseball in 2004, Androstenetrione is not specifically listed as a prohibited substance.

"I still cannot see where I did something wrong," Romero was quoted as saying by ESPN.com. "There is nothing that should take away from the rings of my teammates. I didn't cheat. I tried to follow the rules."

Mitre said in a statement issued by his agent, Paul Cobbe, that he purchased the supplement at a GNC.

"I did take the supplement in question, and accept full responsibility for taking it," Mitre said. "It contained a `contaminant' amount of an illegal, performance-enhancing drug. This was not listed as an ingredient on the packaging, should not have been in the supplement and certainly should not have been available for legal purchase at a store. Despite this, I do accept my punishment because, as a professional, I have a responsibility for what I put into my body."

Mitre is with the New York Yankees' Scranton/Wilkes-Barre Triple-A team after spending 2008 on the Florida Marlins' disabled list. He had elbow ligament replacement surgery in July 15 and reached an agreement with the Yankees in November.

"It's kind of a bitter pill to swallow," Cobbe said. "He made a false assumption that stuff you buy at a GNC is legal. He purchased an illegal drug legally."

If the Phillies have no postponements during the first two months of the season, Romero would be eligible to return June 1 and the suspension would cost him $1,245,902 of his $4 million salary.

Mitre is not expected to pitch until the second half of the season and will serve his suspension while on the disabled list. His contract with the Yankees calls for a salary of $40,000 a month while in the minors and $1.5 million for the season while in the majors, so the suspension will cost Mitre about $70,000.

Romero was the winning pitcher in Game 3 of the World Series and the clinching Game 5 for the champion Phillies. A key member of Philadelphia's strong bullpen, he went 4-4 with a 2.75 ERA and 52 strikeouts in 59 innings. He appeared in 81 games and had one save.

In the postseason, Romero allowed only two hits in eight scoreless appearances spanning 7 1-3 innings.

Romero is expected to report to spring training with the Phillies next month and is allowed to pitch in exhibition games. He'll likely stay in Florida for extended spring training.

"We're very supportive of what Major League Baseball has done and the policies it has implemented," Phillies general manager Ruben Amaro Jr. said during a conference call.

Indians, Pavano agree to $1.5M, one-year deal

CLEVELAND (AP)—The Cleveland Indians and free-agent pitcher Carl Pavano, a four-year bust with the New York Yankees because of injuries, agreed to a one-year, $1.5 million contract on Tuesday. Indians general manager Mark Shapiro said that Pavano, who turns 33 on Thursday, is guaranteed a spot in Cleveland's rotation as long as he's healthy following spring training. Pavano can make another $5.3 million in performance bonuses, based on starts from 18-35 and innings from 130-235.

Ever mindful of their budget, the Indians have been looking to add starting pitching depth this winter and had Pavano in a group of four or five pitchers with "upside" who also made financial sense. They are hoping Pavano has put his injury problems behind him and can step into a starting spot behind Cy Young Award winner Cliff Lee and Fausto Carmona.

Pavano spent most of the past four years on the disabled list with shoulder and elbow issues. He made only 26 starts and went 9-8 with a 5.00 ERA for the free-spending Yankees, who signed him to a deal worth $39.95 million before the 2005 season.

Cleveland is the opponent when New York opens the new Yankee Stadium on April 16. Could Pavano wind up starting against former-Indian CC Sabathia?

"I feel like we're getting him at the right time," Shapiro said. "He's very strong, in good shape now and extremely motivated. We thought he would benefit from a fresh start. It was a tough situation in New York and he was trying to justify the contract that he had."

Pavano became a popular target for frustrated New York fans who were disgusted that the money-is-no-object Yankees missed the playoffs last season for the first time since 1993 despite a $223 million payroll. The Yankees in November declined their $13 million option for 2009 on Pavano, who got a $1.95 million buyout.

Shapiro said the Indians put Pavano through a thorough medical exam, similar to the one they gave free-agent closer Kerry Wood before signing him. The Indians were impressed with Pavano's strength and were encouraged by his final seven starts for the Yankees last season, when he went 4-2.

Pavano is 66-66 with a 4.23 ERA in 175 career starts for Montreal, Florida and New York. He had his best season in 2004, when he went 18-8 for the Marlins.

In his first season with New York, Pavano pitched only 100 innings after injuring his right shoulder. He missed the entire 2006 season and his work ethic and willingness to get back were questioned by some teammates. During his rehab, Pavano broke two ribs in a car accident but initially neglected to inform the Yankees.

He started just two games in 2007 before hurting his elbow and having elbow ligament replacement surgery.

Shapiro said Pavano will not be under any restrictions during spring training.

"He's in good shape and he's strong," the GM said.

To make room for Pavano, the Indians designated infielder Michael Aubrey for assignment.

In other news, Indians designated hitter Travis Hafner was cleared by Dr. James Andrews to start pre-hitting activities this week. Hafner is expected to begin hitting in mid-January.

Andrews performed arthroscopic surgery to clean out Hafner's right shoulder joint on Oct. 14 in Alabama.

SBA sets dates for finals roll-offs

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

The next two Sundays will be a busy week for the island's bowlers, as Saipan Bowling Association holds the 2008 Budweiser King and of the Lanes Tenpin Bowling Tournament at the Saipan Bowling Center on Jan. 11 and 18.

Female keglers will see action first on Jan. 11 with the Top 24 bowlers based on the SBA ranking system getting slots to the 8-game final roll-off.

The qualifiers and their ranking points are Yho Villavicencio (740), Ron Cal (615), Elena Soll (545), Gloria Omechelang (497), Gigi Zapanta (495), Diana Chong (408), Mhel Regis (390), Emi Williams (385), Gina Sablan (375), Diane Camacho (355), Lala Taitano (304), Carol McKenzie (233), Cora Muna (196), Lynn Santos (134), Lilian Gutierrez (115), and Minday Taitano (99).

After the eight-game roll-off, the Top 6 female bowlers will advance to the step-ladder finals.

In the step-ladder finals, the pairings for the elimination game will be No. 3 vs. No. 6 (Game 1) and No. 4 vs No. 5. (Game 2). Winners of the two elimination matches will then move into the semifinals with the victor of Game 2 facing the No. 2 ranked player, and Game 1 winner challenging the No. 1 bowler. Winners of the semis matches will then duel in the finals.

The Bing Energy Drink Prince/Princess of the Lanes Tenpin Bowling Tournament is also set for Jan. 11 with the qualifiers competing in a six-game roll-off to determine the Top 4 bowlers in the step-ladder finals.

Format in the step-ladder finals will be No. 4 vs. No. 1 and No. 2 vs. No. 3.

The qualifiers are Raphael Zapanta, Zack Cruz, Nikko Gutierrez, Marcel and Marion McKenzie, J.D. Torres, Toby and Troy Verdaguer, and Leanne Yarobwemal. Ryan Gutierrez and Jaime Vales also qualified, but they are off-island and could not make it to this Sunday's tournament.

In the King of the Lanes tournament on Jan. 18, the Top 36 players based on the ranking points are allowed to join next Sunday's roll-off.

The Top 12 will automatically advance to the 9-game roll-off, which will determine the Top 6 who will make it to the step-ladder finals.

Male keglers ranked from 13th to 36th will compete in a three-game roll-off with the Top 12 finishers joining the Top 12 (in the ranking points) in the nine-game elimination.

The same format in the ladies' step-ladder finals will be in effect for the men's tournament.

The qualifiers in the men's tournament are Raymond Zapanta (1,664), Dannie Robles (1,521), Richard Leong (1,431), Simon Manacop (1,429), Robert Talavera (1,313), Raymond Angeles (1,236), Raul Dumapit (1,146), Kitz Barja (1,008), Percy Omechelang (1,000), Paul Pangelinan (785), Jon Eparwa (708), Lito Teodoro (648), Alex Cacdac (485), Ronald Epan (458), Ador Dimaano (416), Efren Cacdac (379), Nick Gutierrez (335), Jon Hensley (248), Jorge Soledad (229), Ferdee Generoso (185), Roger Vales (180), Ray Cruz (127), Chester Bai (96), and Totie Limpin 916).

For more information on the final roll-offs, contact Gigi Zapanta at 288-5627 or via email at zapanta@pticom.com.

LITTLE

From Page 28

The Majors, which will be played at the Miguel "Tan Ge" Basa Pangelinan Ballfield, will have the most teams with 15.

The list includes the San Vicente Athletics, As Matuis Twins, Bank of Saipan Red Sox, DPS Dare, Dragons, Hustlers, IT&E Dolphins, Jets, Kagman Little Lions, the Tanapag Little Falcons, McDonald's, Ol'Aces, Shell Suns, Survivors, and the Tanapag Braves.

Major's defending champions Patriots moved up to the Junior League, which will also have the Fielders, Kagman Lion Hearts, Ol'Aces, San Roque D-9ers, and the Red Sox.

The Senior League has five teams in the Fielders, Jets, Lion King, Ol'Aces, and the D-9ers.

The Big League will have six teams in the D-9ers, Fielders, Hustlers, Ol'Aces, Falcons, and the Aztecs.

For more information on SLLB, contact Borja at 322-0340 or 285-1980.

Hatton's corner throws first verbal jab

Ricky will beat Pacquiao, says Mayweather Sr.

MANILA,Philippines—Floyd Mayweather Sr. fired the first warning shot at Filipino hero Manny Pacquiao, who is set to take on his ward, Ricky Hatton, in a mega-buck light welterweight showdown on May 2 in Las Vegas.

The smooth-talking veteran trainer expressed confidence that Hatton will beat Pacquiao, who is coming off a sensational eighth-round technical knockout of Oscar De La Hoya last month that confirmed his status as the world's top pound-for-pound boxer.

"Everyone is building up Pacquiao to be the next great thing but Ricky will handle him," Mayweather Sr., whose son, Floyd Jr., looms as the next opponent of the winner of the Hatton-Pacquiao match, told fightnews.com writer Lee Bates.

Pacquiao

"I know Pacquiao is fast, but Ricky has extremely fast footwork and he's strong," he said. "Believe me when I tell you we have a solid game plan for that fight."

Mayweather Sr. was in Hatton's corner when the British slugger hammered out an 11th-round knockout of American Paul Malignaggi to keep his IBO light welterweight crown last November.

Pacquiao's trainer, Freddie Roach, earlier said Hatton will be a tough customer for the Filipino star, but believes the Gen. Santos City lefty's footwork will be the key to winning the bout.

The fight, which is expected to give Pacquiao his biggest payday yet, will not only be a battle between two fighters with aggressive styles, but between Mayweather Sr. and Roach, who have actually been feuding for the past two years.

Mayweather Sr. threw verbal jabs at Roach when the California-based trainer handled his De La Hoya, his friend and former ward, for his fight against Floyd Jr. in May 2007.

De La Hoya had cut Mayweather Sr. from his corner, after they failed to agree over financial terms and replaced him with Roach. ***(PDI)***

TSUNAMI

From Page 28

Staal is joining sprint races, as he is entered in the 50m and 100m freestyle swim. He will compete first in the 100m freestyle tomorrow and swim in his last individual event on Saturday.

Wong and Staal were the only two CNMI swimmers who made the qualifying time for the tournament, Graf and Kimura will be joining them after Tsunami Saipan received an invitation from Japan Swim Federation to field a relay team in exhibition race.

The Tsunami Saipan quartet will be racing in the 4x200m freestyle relay tomorrow, 4x100m freestyle on Saturday, and 4x100m medley relay on Sunday.

Tsunami Saipan got a wild card in the 100m butterfly with coach Hiro Kimura fielding Graf in that event on Saturday.

Since Tsunami Saipan bets will be competing against some of the best 18-and-under swimmers in the world and future Olympians, coach Kimura is not expecting the CNMI swimmers to medal.

"Our target is to set new personal best time or break CNMI records," Hiro said.

The Tsunami Saipan coach added the tournament in Guam will give his swimmers a clear view on how competitive their foes are and challenge the Commonwealth's swimmer to work harder to be at the level of their opponents.

"Actually, JPP is a too high level meet for Saipan swimmers. We are not ready to swim there yet. But why are we participating? It's because I want our swimmers to have more experience and learn a lot of things from real fast swimmers from other countries," he said.

"I want our swimmers to see the real picture that we are still behind these swimmers. Then, they will ask themselves what they must do to be as fast as their competitors. The answer is practice more, work harder, and do your best in every training and tournament," he added.

Besides Guam, Japan, and the CNMI, the Pan Pacific tournament will also feature swimmers from Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, China, Trinidad & Tobago, Mexico, Guatemala, Mongolia, Hong Kong, Macau, and Palau.

Pool events will start today until Jan. 11, while an open water swim is set for Jan. 12 at Tumon Bay.

MAYOR'S

From Page 28

home plate in the second and last two innings, but managed to keep the driver's seat scoring three and two runs in the third and fourth inning, respectively.

PIC moved within two, 14-16, after making two runs in the second, one in the third, and three in the fourth. Mayor's Office shut PIC out in the fifth, but the former cut the lead to one, 15-16, after bottom of the six inning leadoff batter Annes Cappelle scored on a Mayor's Office centerfielder error.

PIC's next two batters were beaten to first and Mayor's Office secured its first win of the season when third baseman John Maratita caught Cole Pritchard's flyball to leftfield.

Mayor's Office went 21-for-41 at the plate for a batting average of .513. Curiously, PIC had a better batting average with .568 after hitting 21-for-37, but still lost the games after committing numerous errors allowing Mayor's Office runners to advance to bases.

DLNR 26, PSS 7

In the first game in the men's division, Department of Land and Natural Resources needed only five innings to down Public School System, 26-7.

Leftfielder Pete Teigeta went 4-for-4 at bat, scored four runs, and had eight RBIs. He blasted a three-run homer in the second inning, which ended with DLNR ahead by six, 9-3.

DLNR never looked back from thereon, as it drew one homer apiece from Jess Omar and Chris Alepuyo in the third inning. Omar had a two-run homer, while Alepuyo made a solo round-tripper.

DLNR had a breakout game in the third making nine runs to pull away, 18-5, en route to its fifth win in eight games.

PSS dropped to a 2-5 mark losing its third straight match.

Tuesday night's lone game in the women's division between Commonwealth Utilities Corp. and Commonwealth Health Center was rescheduled, as per CUC's request. CUC also played Monday night over at the Miguel "Tan Ge" Basa Pangelinan Ballfield.

REFEREES

From Page 28

are suspending you," Mesa said.

The referee association head added they will present the logbook to BANMI in a meeting this weekend.

Once approved, the logbook may be used in the various leagues in the CNMI, including the Bud Cup and Rotary 18-and-under caging.

Mesa believes having a logbook will further educate players and coaches how to behave on the court.

"They will be aware of their extra actions besides playing the game in the right way because they know these unnecessary fouls/complains will be put on record," Mesa said.

Mesa and fellow referee Noel Delos Santos had already used the logbook yesterday during the opening of the high school division of the 2008-2009 Marianas Interscholastic Sports Organization Basketball League at the Marianas High School Gym. The opening day of the high school caging featured the defending champion Kagman Lady Ayuyus colliding with the Lady Knights.

Meanwhile, Mesa said he will be conducting free clinics on prevention of violations and injuries.

"It's not pleasing to see in the scorebook teams committing 50 to 60 fouls a game. That's a lot and you don't even know if they just played tough defense or just thrilled of giving up fouls," Mesa said.

"Either way, that's not the right way to play basketball. Committing a lot of fouls increases the chances of getting a player injured," he added.

For teams/coaches interested on the clinic, contact Mesa at 868-6578 or 287-7322.

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	29	7	.806	–
New Jersey	17	18	.486	11 1/2
Philadelphia	14	20	.412	14
Toronto	14	21	.400	14 1/2
New York	13	20	.394	14 1/2

Southeast Division

Orlando	27	8	.771	–
Atlanta	22	11	.667	4
Miami	18	15	.545	8
Charlotte	13	22	.371	14
Washington	7	26	.212	19

Central Division

Cleveland	27	6	.818	–
Detroit	21	11	.656	5 1/2
Milwaukee	17	19	.472	11 1/2
Chicago	15	20	.429	13
Indiana	12	22	.353	15 1/2

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

New Orleans	21	10	.677	–
San Antonio	23	11	.676	1/2
Dallas	21	13	.618	2
Houston	21	15	.583	3
Memphis	11	24	.314	12 1/2

Northwest Division

Denver	24	12	.667	–
Portland	20	14	.588	3
Utah	20	15	.571	3 1/2
Minnesota	9	25	.265	14
Oklahoma City	5	30	.143	18 1/2

Pacific Division

L.A. Lakers	27	6	.818	–
Phoenix	19	12	.613	7
Golden State	10	26	.278	18 1/2
L.A. Clippers	8	26	.235	19 1/2
Sacramento	8	28	.222	20 1/2

Yesterday's Games

Orlando 89, Washington 80
Philadelphia 104, Houston 96
Charlotte 114, Boston 106, OT
Minnesota 94, Memphis 87
Oklahoma City 107, New York 99
Chicago 99, Sacramento 94
Dallas 107, L.A. Clippers 102
New Orleans 116, L.A. Lakers 105

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOCAL SCORES

Budweiser Softball Standings

Men's Division

DCCA	9	0
CPA	7	1
Freedom Air	6	1
Beach Boys	6	1
No Zone	6	2
Joeten Motors	6	2
Legislature	5	3
DLNR	5	3
Docomo	4	4
POI	3	3
P & S	3	3
DEQ/CRM	3	5
Law & Order	3	6
PSS	2	5
Customs	2	5
CHC	2	6
CUC	2	6
PIC	1	6
Mayors	1	7
Hopwood	0	7

Women's Division

NMC	7	0
DCCA	3	3
CUC	2	4
Finance	2	4
CHC	1	4

2008-2009 Rocball Community League

Photos by
ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Two Fanians player leaps for a kill during their title game against Ghasias Brothers.

Members of the Fanians, who were runners-up to Ghasias Brothers, pose for a group photo.

Yumi Sheri of the Fanians goes up for a kee.

The Fanians' Larry Sheri, left, attempts to block a Ghasias Brothers player during their title game in the 2008-2009 World Organized Rocball Community League at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

Ghasias Brothers' Freddie Pelisamen, left, battles the Fanians' Larry Sheri on the net.

A Soul Rebel player struggles to return the ball.

An Okies players in action during their semis match against Ghasias Brothers.

An Okies players goes for a toss.

A Ghasias Brothers player serves.

An Okies player makes a return.

SBA sets dates for finals roll-offs

The next two Sundays will be a busy week for the island's bowlers, as Saipan Bowling Association holds the 2008 Budweiser King and of the Lanes Tenpin Bowling Tournament at the Saipan Bowling Center on Jan. 11 and 18.

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Saipan Tribune
Sports

Bobcats send reeling Celtics to another loss

The Charlotte Bobcats stunned Boston 114-106 in overtime to continue the Celtics' sudden slide in the NBA on Tuesday.

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2009 JUNIOR PAN PACIFIC CHAMPIONSHIPS

Tsunami Saipan will compete in 9 events

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REPORTER

Tsunami Saipan swimmers will be competing in nine events in the 2009 Junior Pan Pacific Championships at the Leo Palace Resort Swimming Pool in Guam.

Rezne Wong, Kai Staal, Shin Kimura, and Cooper Graf will be leaving for Guam today and will plunge into action on Friday during Day 2 of the six-day tournament.

Wong, the most experienced swimmer among the four Tsunami Saipan bets having competed in the 2007 FINA World Championships in Melbourne, Australia, is entered in three individual swims, while Staal will be participating in two individual races.

The 18-year-old Wong will debut in the Pan Pacific meet tomorrow, as he competes in the 100m breaststroke event. He holds the CNMI National Record in the 100m breaststroke swim with his time of 1:10.21. Wong will also swim in the 100m butterfly on Saturday and in the 200m individual medley race on Sunday.

See TSUNAMI on Page 26

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

From left, Shin Kimura, Cooper Graf, and Kai Staal, enjoy a light moment during their training session at the Kan Pacific Swimming Pool in Marpi yesterday.

Mayor's Office nips PIC for first victory

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

PIC's Otsuka Masatoshi swings during their regular season game in the 2008 Inter Government/Business Softball League last month at the Miguel "Tan Ge" Pangelinan Ballfield. PIC dueled Mayor's Office Tuesday night at Capital Hill Ballfield with the latter winning the make-up game.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Mayor's Office used a jackrabbit start to outlast Pacific Islands Club, 16-15, in the men's division of the 2008 Inter Government/Business Softball League Tuesday at the Capital Hill Ballfield.

The victory was Mayor's Office first in eight games, while PIC absorbed its sixth loss in seven matches.

Mayor's Office had an 11-run top of the first highlighted by rightfielder Fred Robert's grandslam.

Mayor's Office had four batters going 2-for-2 at the plate in the first inning alone.

PIC also had a strong start making eight runs at the bottom of the first.

In the next five innings, both teams slowed down with Mayor's Office preserving the win after giving up only one run at the bottom of the sixth.

Mayor's Office failed to reach

See MAYOR'S on Page 26

Referees group comes out with 'violations' logbook

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REPORTER

Basketball Association of the Northern Mariana Islands Referees Association has launched a logbook which would monitor violations committed by players and coaches in BANMI-sanctioned tournaments.

Dubbed "Coaches and Competitors Violations Logbook," referees association president Arnold Mesa said this will give basketball officials basis for sanctioning players/coaches and at the same time explain to the violators how authorities come up with the penalties.

Mesa explained entries to the logbook will include ejections, technical fouls, flagrant fouls, warnings (depending on the magnitude), and other unsportsmanlike conducts.

Referees Arnold Mesa, left, and Noel Delos Santos show the Coaches and Competitors Violations Logbook after the game in the MISO caging yesterday at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

"After the violation, it will be the responsibility of the referee who made the call to approach the scorer's table and make an entry in the logbook. Dates, nature of violation, and the names of the parties involved must be put into writing," he added.

"If a player complains why he is being suspended, you can show him a copy of the entries in the logbook. This is what you have done and this is the reason we

See REFEREE on Page 26

Little League opening moved to Feb. 14

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

The opening of the 2009 season of the Saipan Little League Baseball has been moved from Jan. 10 to Feb. 14.

SLLB president Michael Borja in a telephone interview said that during a meeting Tuesday night at the conference room of the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium, the SLLB board decided to push back the opening date.

"Holiday season had just past and most of the teams have yet to secure requirements for the 2009 season, so we decided to give them more time to prepare and complete the needed documents," Borja said.

Borja

Borja added they are moving the opening date of the SLLB 2009 season to give way to the visiting LG Twins of Korea who are training at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Ballfield.

"They will be holding their last training session on Feb. 13 and I think the ballfield will also undergo repairs so it's best that we pushed back the opening of the 2009 season," Borja said.

But the SLLB president said that teams have only until Jan. 24 to submit the league's requirements. Managers and coaches are also asked to attend a meeting on the same date at 9am at the conference room of the Ada Gym.

Borja said this season's SLLB will feature a total of 32 teams.

See LITTLE on Page 26